ARCH
th
24
5c

THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

Young
Scobee
n Dunn
. Rowland
es Surdez
D. Howden Smith
Brier
e Brydges Rodney
ewsom
lams

---

nplete Novel
nplete Novelettes

COMPARE the Williams' cap with any other. There's nothing like it. Compare Williams' in any and every other way:

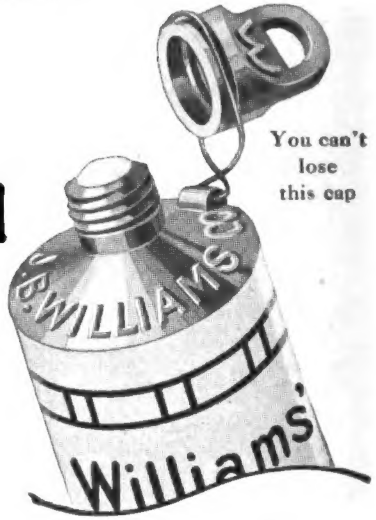
You'll like its lather—uncannily swift in the way it softens tough beards. For years the envy of other shaving soap makers.

You'll like its purity—no coloring disguise is needed in Williams'. It is a natural white.

You'll like its soothing effect—no complexion soap in the world is more beneficial.

And last, there's the Hinged Cap! Add to your Williams' shave this "extra dividend" of a cap that you can't lose. Then compare.

"That new hinged cap sure is a wonder"

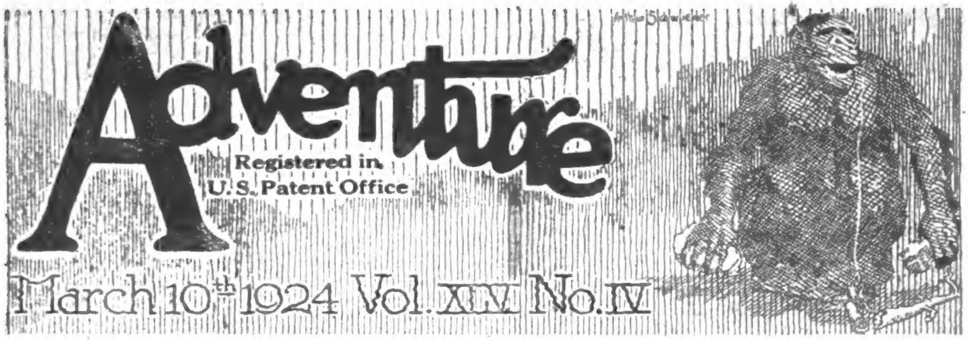


You can't lose this cap

Williams' Shaving Cream

Have you tried Williams' Aqua Velva? The new scientific formula for after-shaving use? Sample free. Write Dept. 83

The J. B. Williams Co., Glastonbury, Conn., The J. B. Williams Co., Ltd. (Canada), 1114 St. Patrick St., Montreal


Adventure
Registered in U.S. Patent Office
March 10th 1924 Vol. XLV No. IV

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President
C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance
Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 90 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1924, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for March 10th, 1924, Issue

The Galvanized Captain *A Complete Novel* . . . . . George Brydges Rodney 3
The West—an Indian raid.

A Cool Passage *A bit of the sea* . . . . . . H. Campbell Buckley 62

Blow-Guns *An Aboriginal Weapon* . . . . . . Gordon MacCreagh 64

The Man Who Spoke with the Wind *An Off-the-Trail Story** J. Allan Dunn 65
Solomon Islands—flying kites and native suspicion.

Out of the East . . . . Georges Surdez 74
Africa—the man who played ghost.

Slants on Life *To a Prisoner* . . . . Bill Adams 80

Foreign Parts . . . . Royce Brier 83
Arizona—a badman looks the same—East or West.

Porto Bello Gold *A Five-Part Story Part IV* . . . . . Arthur D. Howden Smith 91
Spanish Main—the treasure of the *Santissima Trinidad.*

The Deserters *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . . J. D. Newsom 124
South Seas—no sane man goes looking for missing men in Epoviti—but *Hargraves* did.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

The Male Siren's Chantey *Verse* . . . . . . **Edward A. Murphy** 139

Pirates and Prisoners of "Crusoe's Isle" . . . . . **John L. Considine** 140

Battling Butch Gets His . . . . **Gordon Young** 141
Waterfront—three who were shanghaied.

Elijah and the Kangaroo Wallop . . . . **John T. Rowland** 152
Sea—marine honesty.

Land Love ***A Complete Novelette*** . . . . **Barry Scobee** 160
South Dakota—two old-timers wanted the same section.

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 175

Camp-Fire Stations 181

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 181

Lost Trails 181

Ask Adventure 182
A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising sixty-three geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons Past and Present, Salt and Fresh Water Fishing, Tropical Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, United States and Foreign, and American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **Arthur Schwieder**

Cover Design . . . . **A. L. Ripley**

One New Serial, Three Complete Novelettes

WHEN *David Gideon*—ignorant of all things African—attempts to thrust his moral code upon the people of *Melefe*, Native Commissioner *Symes* is faced with the hardest problem of his long career and calls upon his old ally, *Zuri* the witch doctor, to aid him. "BLOOD AND FIRE," a complete novelette of South Africa, by L. Patrick Greene, in the next issue.

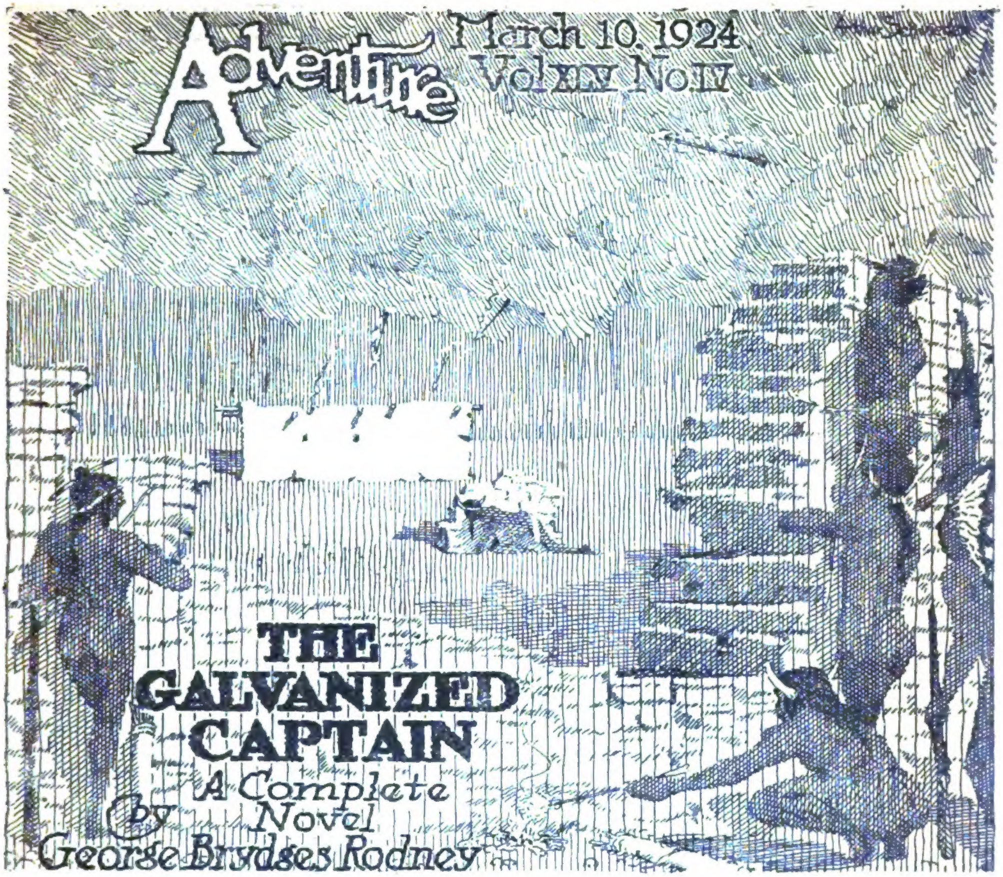
THREE Americans—*McKay, Knowlton* and *Ryan*—aided by *José Martinez*, face the lurking perils of Brazil's steaming jungles, searching for their old friend *Rand*. "THE KING OF NO MAN'S LAND," a four-part story by Arthur O. Friel, begins in the next issue.

DON EVERHARD has some new adventures among the shady folk of San Francisco and New York. "OINTMENT-POTS," a novelette by Gordon Young, complete in the next issue.

SAMPSON'S one idea was dominance; and to this end he had planned for years. How he finally attempted to accomplish his goal is told in "THE THUMB," a complete novelette of the sea, by Kingsley Moses, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and last day of each month**



Author of "Bad Medicine," "The Clue," etc.

ON A hot day in May, 1865, nine men were riding slowly across the flat desert that lies between the Rio Seco and the Hand o' God Range that shoots up in a fire-tipped ridge of rocks to the west of the great plain. The baking expanse looked like a great brick-yard with never a sign of life except for an occasional jack-rabbit that from its vantage point under an overhanging rock watched the dusty column from lack-luster eyes or a coyote slinking, belly down and tail a-droop, along the lip of some long-dry arroyo.

High up in the blue a couple of buzzards circled, pitching and sheering to right and left as they scouted for a corpse. There was nothing else except far off to the right and left where thin wisps of white smoke crept lazily into the sky; the smokes from some far-off Apache signal-fires telling of the progress of that creeping column.

The horses looked as if the coyotes had some reason for following them and the riders were in little better case. The leader, a tall lean youngster of some twenty-six years, rode lightly enough, but his eyes were the eyes of a man who has lived long in an inhospitable land where a man's life hangs on the quickness of his trigger-finger. All were dressed in frontiersman's garb—broad-brimmed tall-crowned sombreros heavy with tarnished silver filigree, trousers of Indian tanned buckskin and heavy moccasins of native Maricopa make with wrap leggings Apache in design. Mexican spurs adorned their heels and their throats were circled with the heavy voluminous neckerchiefs that save mouths and throats from the choking dust of the desert.

"Where's 'Yavapai?' " The leader raised his head and glanced over his shoulder.

"He went over to yonder ridge, cap'n. He said he didn't like the way those signal

Copyright, 1924, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

smokes are trailin' us right into the post. Seems to think the Apaches are workin' in too close on us."

Ralph Mason grinned appreciatively.

"They won't bother us any more this trip," he said slowly, "but they *are* kind o' crowdin' the corpse. I've never seen 'em so nervy before. They must be in force back in the hills. We're too close to the post now for 'em to jump us in any force. To tell the truth I rather wish they would try it in the open. If we were a party of the 'Blue-bellies' they might rush us but they'll hardly try it with the Galvanized men. They've done it before. Here comes Yavapai now— Any sign, Steve?"

Yavapai Steve rode up to the near side of his young leader. He was a short, unlovely man, bearded with a forked gray beard that swept his waist-line. Where his skin was exposed it was a deep, rich saddle-color and his eyes twinkled like little crumbs of glass set in his face. Yavapai Steve had been one of the men with David Jackson on that historic trip, the first that was made to the Pacific Coast in 1827 and he had never left the country. Rumor and tradition had it that that land was filled with wonderful lodes of silver and of gold, and Yavapai had always intended to take a month or two off some time and make his fortune. So far he had never done it. As he explained to Ralph Mason:

"I ain't never had time to make my fortune. I've been kept so derned busy makin' a livin' that makin' a fortune didn't seem to count."

"Any sign, Steve?" Ralph repeated his question.

"Plenty," Yavapai grinned. "When you see smokes like them you— Well I reckon you know as much as me. An' when you see signs of Apaches you want to be derned keerful."

Ralph smiled agreement.

"An' when you don't see no sign you all want to be a derned sight keerfuller. There's the post over yonder——"

They crossed the bare mesa above the stream, forded the creek and an hour later made their camp on the narrow flat on the creek banks below the scattered adobe buildings that composed Fort Critten. Their camp was poor enough, three tiny wickiups built Indian fashion by burying the butts of some small bushes in the earth, tying the tops together and then covering the resultant cone with grass and branches of the Spanish bayonets on top of which earth was heaped.

Behind the wickiups a short picket-line between two bushes held the nine horses and the two pack-mules. When the men had groomed their mounts and watered them they sought the shade of the wickiup till the cook should summon them to supper. In about a half-hour he called them.

The tiny greasewood fire smoked and stunk in the twilight as the men rolled out for supper. Coming back from the horse-lines Ralph looked them over, grinning.

"Ives, Carter, Fenton, Barr, Lee, Duryea, Sykes— How many of you're goin' to get drunk tonight?"

They looked at him sheepishly. It was early yet.

"All right. Only I want you to wait till I get back from seein' the commandin' officer. What's the matter, Sykes?"

"Captain that *pintado* pony o' Duryea's ought to be put out of his misery. He'll never make another trip. He's been foundered twice an' he only made the post by bein' nursed along. He walks like a cat goin' over hot bricks. Next trip he'll let Duryea down as sure as shootin'. You know what it means to start out on the trail with a weak horse."

Ralph did know. A man's horse was his very life in Arizona in 1865. The finding of the skeleton of a horse on the desert nearly always meant that a little farther on the body of a man would be found where the coyotes had picked him clean.

"Better kill him at once," he said slowly. "I'll get another from Captain Burt in the mornin'."

Sykes started for the picket-line loosing his holster when Ralph stopped him.

"No shootin' Sykes. If the garrison has seen those signal-smokes in the hills one shot'll stampede 'em for all night. Use a knife."

"I lost mine, sir, crossin' Willow Water yesterday."

"Here then. Take mine. Bring it back right away. I ain't goin' to take a chance on losin' it."

Sykes took the knife and disappeared in the dusk. In twenty minutes he came back and handed the knife to Ralph who took one glance at it and then proceeded to cleanse the blade by thrusting it deep into the earth.

"What kept you so long," he asked curiously.

"Didn't want the smell o' blood near the picket-line. It would have made the horses ramp and stamp all night. I led him downstream an' gave the body to the Mexican teamsters. They're camped there. They had that *pintado* jerked into strips while I waited.

"Well—" Ralph rose—"Two of you stay here till I get back. The rest of you come back as sober as you can manage."

He strolled up to the post and across the hot little parade ground conscious of unfavorable comment from the guard as he passed the adobe guard-house on the edge of the creek-bank. The members of the garrison had no great love for Ralph Mason or his men—the "Galvanized Soldiers"—for they knew that the commanding officer regarded them as a sort of *corps d'elite* for border service.

Galvanized Soldiers! It was a good name and on the frontier good names stuck. They meant something. In this case it meant that Ralph Mason and his seven men taken prisoners after Jackson's raid down the valley of the Shenandoah had been immured in a prison-camp in the North. It meant that when the Western frontier was ablaze with Indian forays that the Federal Government had recognized the wealth of material at hand in the prison-camps if it could be used. Given the choice between being immured in the prison-camps for the rest of the war or accepting service under the Union flag against the Indians on the frontier many Confederate prisoners of war accepted the offer with the distinct promise that they would never be called upon to serve against any but the Indians.

Ralph and the seven men under him had taken this offer and had been sent overland to the edges of the earth—Arizona where a half-score of puny garrisons were doing their best to hold back the warring Apaches.

Those garrisons needed them too. With every regiment in the East calling for men, men, men; small were the numbers and by no means the best was the quality of the men who could be sent to hold the West till order could be established. Recruits were shipped from time to time but they were raw, youngsters totally unaccustomed to the life, knowing nothing of the foe they were to fight.

It was no wonder that Major Lynch depended more on Ralph Mason and his Galvanized Men than he could on the forty men of the post of Fort Critten. For nearly three years Ralph had made his headquarters at the post spending but few hours in the place. The result was that under the tutelage of Yavapai Steve that group of seven men had developed into such a fighting unit as had seldom been seen. One or two such men could be found but no such party that worked together in such perfect harmony. Was some one wanted to follow a trail? Ralph Mason was sent for. Was an investigation to be made of some alleged Indian outrage? Again it was the Galvanized Captain and his men.

His blue-coated confrères silently resented the open preference, but there was no evading issues and Ralph Mason governed himself and his men accordingly. There was little in common between them and the members of the garrison except after pay-day when the funds of the enlisted force generally found their way into the tattered pockets of the out-land men. They only remained in the post when there was some very good reason to keep them from the trail. The result was that Ralph had always ready to his hand a group of eight men, including old Steve, whom no drudgery could sicken, no trail could tire, no Indian wile delude.

Even the raiding Apaches regarded them in a very different light from the heavy-footed, clumsy-handed soldiers in blue clothes. They had found out that with perfect impunity they could creep through the brush on a soldier-camp, fire a shot and stampede the grazing horses in comparative safety, but to try it with the Galvanized Soldiers was a much different matter.

With those ragged ruffians they were likely at any moment to run against the 'business end' of a Spencer carbine in the hands of a skilled shot out-lying among the horses for exactly that purpose. Then, too, the regular soldiers of the garrison never touched the body of a foe except to bury him. The Galvanized Soldiers, on the other hand, knowing that scalping is a sign that the soul of the slain is bound forever as a slave to the slayer in the Spirit Land, invariably scalped the dead clear down to the ears.

As a rule small bands avoided the proximity of the Galvanized Soldiers as wolves avoid a baited trap. Tricks and wiles used against them reacted on the devisers; false trails rarely led them astray very far and, no matter how drunk they might get when off duty, when on duty they followed Ralph Mason with the speed and accuracy of a well-trained foot-ball eleven. Hard-bitten, self-reliant, profane though they were, Ralph knew them and so too did old Major Lynch, the lynx-eyed old dragoon officer, who was in command of the desirable post of Fort Critten that was located at the back door of the country where Cochise held sway.

Below the post lay the little settlement of Salsipuedes like a tiny blister on a fever-smitten face. Salsipuedes had never been more than a blister. Years ago, before the Gadsden Purchase had been made, some optimist had started for California by the southern route. When he reached the Rio Amargo, the bitter stream that reluctantly washes the feet of Fort Critten, his cattle died and he could not go farther; whereupon he settled there. To him came other men, who, facing the many leagues to California faltered—and stayed. Thus was Salsipuedes born. It was a big town for the Border; a dozen small adobe houses low-squatting in the heat, from whose flat earthen roofs the sun's rays swirled up in tiny spirals of blue mirage; a great rambling adobe building that was half-bar half-store, and a public corral fenced with ocatilla that, giving out new branches every year, had formed a living barrier. West of the houses long piles of heaped cord-wood formed black oblongs on the desert. That wood had been hauled from the neighboring mountains to be sold at fabulous prices to the troops in Fort Critten.

That was Salsipuedes. Its very name was distinctive for it happens to mean "Get-out-if-you-can."

Few people could.

IN THE long room of the bar, two men faced each other over a liquor-slopped table. It was hot in that room and the whisky only made them hotter but they were used to that. Over the drink Barton frowned heavily at his companion. He was not at all satisfied with conditions.

"Now listen Perkins. You're the only man who can do it and it's got to be done. What was the price of the last contract that we got for cuttin' that fire-wood?"

"Nineteen twenty," said Perkins slowly.

"Two more contracts'll fix us so we kin leave this cursed country and pull stakes for California. We'd have had a walk-over in gettin' this next contract if Walters hadn't put in his bid. If we kin find out what Walters has bid we kin underbid him an' git the contract. See? All right. Now it happens that Captain Burt the quartermaster at Critten lets the contract. Burt owes me two thousand dollars in borrered money—money that he's lost in poker-games right in this store. Anyway Walters don't get the same kind o' wood that we do. Most of his stuff's on'y mesquite roots. He uses greasers fer wood-cutters an' they're too much afeard o' the Indians to go up into the hills where the big timber is——"

"Well?" Perkins was still obtuse.

"That army post eats up fire-wood like a nigger eats molasses. I know that Walters has put in his bid 'cause Burt told me today that if we didn't git our bid in tomorrow he'd have to award it to Walters an'—I want to know what Walters's bid is."

"I don't know how you're goin' to find that out," said Perkins slowly.

"Well, I do. Only three days ago Burt got Major Lynch to send an ambulance and escort o' four soldiers to Yuma to get his daughter. She's comin' out from the East by way of San Francisco. A new garrison is on the way too—three companies of the First Cavalry—but they ain't due fer four months yet. I gave old Burt the money to bring his daughter out here. I reckon if he's properly approached he'll remember what Walters's bid is."

"He won't give up no-ways," muttered Mr. Perkins oracularly. "You know what these fool army officers are in money matters."

"That's exactly what I do know," grinned his partner. "You go up to the post and see Burt. Tell him that we want that contract bad an' that if we git it the matter of the two thousand dollars he owes me'll be overlooked in the discard. Work him gentle, Perk, but give him the spur if you have to. *Sabe?* You an' me splits even on this like we always do."

"Yeh. Exactly like we always do," muttered Perkins. "You stay here an' measure up the cord-wood while I go up into the hills an' boss the gangs with an Apache lyin' behind every piñon-pine waitin' fer a chance to send an arrer through my gizzard. Like we always do— Suppose he don't agree," he said curtly.

"He'll agree," said Barton pouring himself a fresh drink. "Specially when you tell him that if he don't give it up I'll go to the commandin' officer an' tell him that the quarter-master's been gamblin'. He knows what it'll mean if an officer who's responsible fer public funds is caught gamblin'. It means dismissal from the army an' he can't afford that. His daughter's comin' out here. From all that I hear, she's the real thing an' he'd face even an Apache arrer before he'd have this come out right now anyway. You go an' see him an' put it to him straight Perkins. Put it to him straight an' as hard as you kin. I ain't aimin' to press Burt, but I am intendin' to git that contract. I kin smell champagne in San Francisco right now. Can't you?"

"I can smell a whole lot o' things that I can't swear to," said Perkins darkly. "I'll do it, though. I reckon I'd better get up there as late as I can make it. Better not let anybody see me with him if the contract's to be awarded tomorrow. See you later."

Barton nodded, poured himself a last drink and put away his bottle as his partner went out of the room.

II

MAJOR LYNCH met Ralph at the door. He ushered his guest into his little sitting-room and motioned him to a big chair that was covered with an elk-skin. The house was typical—a three-room adobe building with a small kitchen detached from it. Both buildings were roofed with earth and the tiny windows well up under the eaves were heavily barred with wooden bars set in the adobe walls. In one window hung a great red earthen olla, a jar for the drinking-water that cooled by the simple process of evaporation in the wind. Deer's antlers pegged to the brick walls supported articles of clothing and equipment, and the hard-packed earthen floor was covered with priceless blankets of ancient Navajo and Zuni weave dyed in such colors as are never seen today. The effect of the room was somewhat that of a newly started museum. Like most Arizona houses of the period, the door was cut in two halves of which the upper was generally kept open for air.

Major Lynch produced a bottle of whisky and set it before his guest. Then he turned and strode up and down his little room like a caged puma.

"I sent for you Mason to tell you that the —— has broken loose again. I have just learned that a party of prospectors has come in tonight. They're down in Salsipuedes now. They report that a wagon train was jumped several days ago in Bear Creek Cañon. Apaches did it of course. I suppose a party of those accursed hostiles has been raidin' South."

"They certainly have, sir. I ran into a small party up on the Hassayampa and they followed me clear down to the very gates of the post. They're out in force, major."

The major glared at him uncertainly for a moment.

"I wish I'd known of this before we sent the escort to Yuma for Miss Burt," he said forcefully. "Of course there is no real need to worry but— Confound it all——"

Ralph sat up very straight in his chair.

"I hadn't heard of that, major. What was it?" he asked.

"Oh, Burt's daughter was due to arrive at Yuma from San Francisco so I sent an ambulance into Yuma for her. Of course an escort went along. Corporal Kelly and three men with the driver. Bear Creek Cañon is most unpleasantly close to the Yuma trail. Of course those hostiles will jump back into the hills again at once. But——"

The major was plainly worried. The only certainty about an Apache was that he was generally to be found where he was least wanted; that he could travel on foot seventy-five miles a day and that he was as wily and as full of strategems as the Father of Wiles himself.

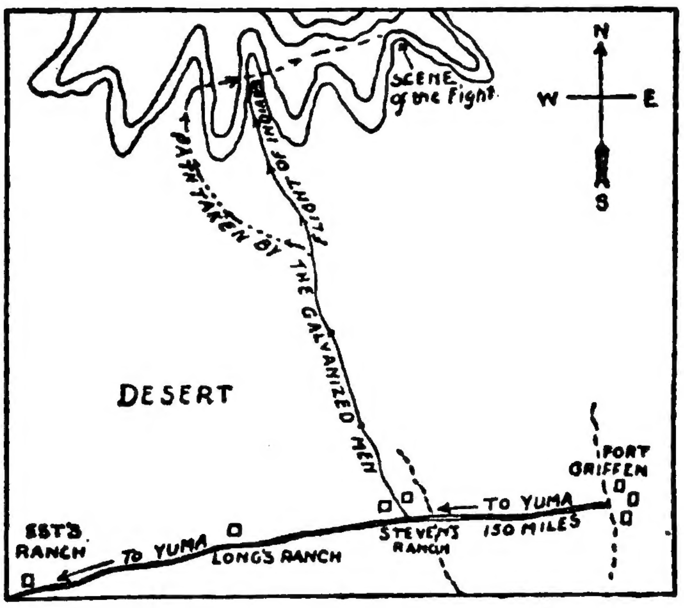
Major Lynch went on:

"I've a good notion to send you out toward Yuma to join that escort. I've no confidence in our men unless they have along with them men who are used to this Indian warfare. They're a good deal like children—willing enough, but totally inexperienced, and I can't get them experience unless I have enough men to garrison the post and at the same time keep some of them out in the field. They mean well, but they simply don't know. I wish to Heaven the Government would either abandon these posts or else send out a force big enough to handle the situation. Forty men to garrison this place and to enforce law and order among the Indians!" he snorted. "It's ridiculous! One might as well charge —— with a dipper full of water. They'd have saved lives and money if the Apaches had killed young Bascom before he started this war."

He fell into silence, poured himself a fresh drink and paced the floor anew.

Ralph's eyes followed him, and his gaze was full of sympathy. He felt that the major was right and that the Apaches would not have gone on the war-path but for that fatal act of bad faith on the part of a young and totally inexperienced officer. That act had set alight the torch of war and its flame was licking along the Border, letting loose upon the frontier Cochise and his Chiricahua Apaches, as desperate a band as the Southwest had seen.

Five years before, on the complaint of a settler that Indians had stolen his stock, Lieutenant Bascom who had just graduated from the military academy at West Point had been sent to Apache Pass to adjust the matter. In answer to his request several chiefs had come in to meet him to adjust the matter in conference. Among the warriors was Cochise, then a chief of some standing among his people and at that time a putative friend of the whites. He had reason to be for he was making a good deal of money over wood contracts and by supplying hay to the distant garrisons.



After a heated discussion Cochise said that his men had not committed the outrage, but that he would investigate among his friends and endeavor to get the matter straightened out and to recover the stolen property. Believing that force was the only law that the Indians knew, and forgetting what was due to men who had come in on his own invitation for a "talk" Bascom made a fatal mistake. He threw a cordon of troops around the meeting and captured six of the Apaches. In the resultant melée, Cochise who was badly wounded escaped in the brush and from that time on vowed unending war on the white men.

How well he kept his vow many a blazing homestead and reeking scalp bore silent witness.

The Apache was unique in his way and stood out different in many ways from his more northern brother, the Horse Indian of the Plains. The Sioux were brave and crafty in war; the Cheyennes excelled most in Border cunning; the Crows could steal the teeth from the head of a man who had his mouth tight shut, but an Apache would, if left so little as a single finger on one hand, fight like a wildcat of his native hills. From their fastnesses in the mountains, Mescaleros, White Mountains, Chiricahua Apaches, men of a hundred tribes and half-tribes would on the slightest pretext sweep down upon the hot lands where men were trying to establish homes, lay waste a tract and with their prisoners and their loot take refuge again in the gorges of the hills where few dared follow them.

"I don't want to send you out on a wild-goose chase, Mason, when you've just got back. I doubt if it's at all necessary anyway. I'd send for those prospectors, but of course they'll all be drunk by this time. Get your men and horses in good shape, Mason. I think it very probable that I may send you out on the Yuma trail tomorrow."

Ralph rose.

"Very good, major. Is that all, sir?"

Major Lynch looked at him with friendly eyes. He liked Ralph. The youngster was always willing, always deferential and ready at a word for the most arduous tasks.

"Why—yes and—no," he said slowly. "This is something personal, Mason. When this war is over—I mean the war between the States—what do you intend to do? From all that we hear, and that is little enough, it seems pretty clearly established now that the war is practically over. No matter how firmly she sets her back to the wall, the South can not win. She has made a gallant struggle. What will you do when you are all clear, Mason? Go back to the East?"

"I don't quite know, sir. There are no ties for me there now. My father died in

'62; just after Antietam, you know, and the plantation was sold. My father had prevision enough to see to that. He must have seen that the war could only result in the dismemberment of the South for he arranged for the sale of the plantation to an English firm. I had letters several months ago telling me that the lawyers had completed the sale and that in accordance with my father's instructions they had invested the money from the sale in good negotiable securities—the best that they could buy."

"Government bonds?" asked Major Lynch.

Ralph shook his head smilingly.

"Baltimore and Ohio," he said. "United States bonds were none too secure about that time, major. That was just before General Lee's Pennsylvania campaign. The lawyers wrote and asked me what to do with the bonds and I wrote them to send them out to me by registered mail as soon as they could. When they come and when I am discharged or exchanged I'll make up my mind what to do—where I will go. I want to shake the dust of this country off my feet. It is no land for me."

Major Lynch shook his head as one who dislodges a fly.

"I'd like you to get over that feeling, Mason. I suppose it is perfectly natural, but try to look at it this way: 'We've had the deuce of a big family row all right, but it is practically over now and when it is, it'll be time to be relatives again. Tremendous as things were, we fought over nonessentials, boy. The real essentials are honesty and law and good order—and a genuine desire to work for the people. That and a fear of God.' Get me, Mason?"

"Yes sir, I believe I do."

"I'm sure you do," said the major heartily. "No matter what happens don't fly off at a tangent, boy. And now I'll bid you good night. Come up and have breakfast with me."

As Ralph stepped out into the cool dusk of the parade-ground and the major's door closed behind him a twinkling light at the far end of the post met his gaze. He walked a few yards across the parade and stopped. What could that light mean? The guardhouse on the other side of the post was alight, but there was reason for that; but the light that he wondered about was in the office of the quartermaster. It was none of his business, of course, but in the course of his life at the pleasant little post of Fort Critten Ralph had found that most of the serious affairs of life turned out to be things that in the beginning had been none of his business.

"Burt givin' a poker-party I suppose," he laughed grimly. He well knew that the quartermaster was forbidden by the army regulations to indulge in games of chance. He also knew that in card-games with the men who played at Critten Burt had no chance. It was a game of skill.

"I'll walk over and see if he's even got a pair of deuces."

It was pitch dark on the parade and the fringe of tiny cottonwood-trees before the office showed like a black edge to a blue square. A tiny light twinkled in the office itself. Suspecting nothing Ralph was about to knock at the closed door when a sharp whispering voice came to him through the night. The voice was that of Captain Burt.

"—I tell you, Perkins, I can't do it—I can't do it, man. I swear I'd like to help Barton out, but—you must see, Perkins, that it's impossible."

Ralph pressed more closely to the wall near the window and listened. At first a prick of conscience told him that he was doing a thing not countenanced by honorable men. Then something happened that blunted the point of that for he heard Perkins say shortly:

"All right, sir. Have it your own way. Only remember that if you don't come across with the amount of the Walters bid, Barton'll sure go to Major Lynch in the mornin' an' tell him that you owe him near two thousand dollars o' gambled money. You know what that'll mean for you, don't you?"

Burt did know. He knew very well and it was more than the heat of the Arizona night that sent the sweat streaming down his face.

"I tell you Perkins—" Burt was half-whining— "I tell you I don't like it. How can I do what Barton asks? Suppose it should get out? Suppose anybody should know that you met me here tonight and you get the contract in the mornin'. Don't you see it would kill me forever. I'd be tried an' dismissed and, Perkins, I haven't got a cent but my pay and I owe more than I can ever pay——"

Ralph listened now in earnest. He knew Sam Walters well. He knew that he had put in a bid on that wood contract because he needed the money. He knew that Walters was honest in his dealings and that Perkins and Barton were far from bearing an unblemished shield. Walters had many cattle to pay for that he had never yet got back from the hills. The few Mexican range-riders were too fearful of the Apaches to go into these hills for those cattle that meant so much to Sam Walters. When he had put in a bid on the wood contract friends had warned him that he would have little chance of getting it for Barton and Perkins had been given the contract with such unfailing regularity that it was regarded as their vested right.

"I'm to take it as threat then—" Burt's voice was clear but shaky.

"—— you." This time Perkins' voice was clear enough. "You can take it anyway you've a mind to. I'm tellin' you cold facts. I ain't askin' you to give us the contract, but I am tellin' you in cold talk that if you don't tell me in five minutes what the price is per cord that Walters is offerin', my partner'll sure go to Major Lynch in the mornin'. That's about all I reckon."

Burt raised his head from his hands and Ralph saw that he was deadly white.

"You've got me foul," he said curtly. "You've got me where I've got to do it, Perkins. I can't do anything else. I can't lose my commission out here and find my daughter on my hands without a cent. But— How do I know that you'll play fair with me, Perkins?"

"You don't know a derned thing about it," said Perkins jerkily. "You don't need to know. I'll tell you somethin' else on my own account: If we should happen to git that contract it'll mean a cold five hundred dollars to somebody—that's all."

Ralph stood well back from the barred window and looked inside the room at the risk of immediate discovery. While he watched he saw Burt rise from the table and move toward the safe that stood against the wall. While he was still fumbling with the cumbersome lock Ralph made up his mind.

More than ever he realized that this was no business of his, but common honesty is the business of every man. Perkins and Barton meant to make poor old weak Burt lose his honor to gain a few dirty dollars. Very quietly he opened his holster and while Burt was standing with an envelope in his hand that he had taken from a pigeon-hole in the safe, Ralph kicked open the door and faced the pair.

"I wouldn't fool with those papers, Captain Burt," he said gently. "Yes, I heard every word that has been said. Sit down, Perkins." The one sibilant carried a pressure like an overloaded boiler. "If you try to handle your gun, Perkins, I'll drop you in your tracks."

Perkins' hand instantly dropped and he tried to look injured. Ralph's gun-muzzle dropped in line with Perkins' stomach. A gunman never points at the head. He covers the point that he is most likely to hit and that is generally the belly. Perkins knew his man. Not for nothing had he known the Galvanized Captain for more than two years. He sat down. Even then he was by no means certain that Ralph would not shoot. Burt sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands. Presently he raised his head.

"What do you mean to do, Captain Mason?" he asked weakly.

Ralph looked at them both and his glance was hot with scorn.

"You're a precious pair," he said sharply. "Perkins who knows about this matter besides yourself and your partner?"

"Nobody," said Perkins sullenly.

"Who have put in bids on this contract?" demanded Ralph.

"Nobody but Walters." Burt's tone was hopeful. "There will be only two bidders."

"So if one withdraws the other one gets it. Is that right?"

"Yes."

"Perkins—" Ralph turned on the wondering Perkins— "you know what'll happen if I go to Major Lynch with this matter. You and your precious partner will be run out of Salsipuedes and you'll never get another chance to bid on an army contract. Burt there will be tried and dismissed——"

"And my daughter is coming out here—" Burt lapsed into the silence of utter shame. He did not mean it as a bid for sympathy. Ralph understood him.

Ralph faced them both and his eyes held theirs as he spoke.

"It's none of my business. I'm not a citizen of your country— Thank the Lord," he added fervently. "But I am interested in common honesty. I ought to go to Major Lynch with this entire matter but I'm not going to——"

The faces of both men brightened.

"—but I'll tell you what I am going to do. Perkins you go as straight to your partner as you can run and tell him all that has taken place. Also you tell him that if either you or he puts in a bid on that wood contract or any other contract as long as I'm here I'll go straight to the commanding officer with the whole thing. Not only that but I'll get you both. Make no mistake about that. *You* know Perkins that I mean what I say. Is that clear? If this thing gets out I'll kill Barton. I know that he schemed this. It's got his mark on it. I'm not doin' this to spare either of you. I'm doin' it to save Sam Walters from your thievery. Is it true that you owe this man two thousand dollars?"

Burt's face was downcast but he answered bravely enough:

"Yes. I'm sorry to say that it is. I'll pay him back all right if I can only hang on. What I've said about my daughter coming out is true enough, Captain Mason. I'm simply backed up against the wall."

Ralph's face was dark and his lips were drawn to a thin line as he turned on Perkins.

"I know you and your dirty kind," he growled. "You get a man in your clutches and you squeeze him, you —— devil-fish. Burt, I can't help you in this matter and I'm not sure that I would if I could. I don't like your kind or the color of your clothes. Major Lynch is the only man in your whole outfit that I take to. He's a *man*. You—Perkins—" He turned on the shrinking Perkins— "I advise you from motives of policy to let Burt alone. Give him a chance and he'll pay Barton what he owes him. If you use what you've got on Burt you'll lose every cent. I mean Barton will. Good night, *gentlemen*. Remember, Perkins, if you or Barton put a bid in on that contract I'll kill you as sure as a gun's iron!"

He turned and strode out into the night. The door slammed heavily behind him and the two plotters heard his footsteps die away into silence.

III

DOWN at Barton's store riot had broken loose in earnest. The three prospectors who had come in from the hills with the news of the Bear Creek Cañon outrage had had such narrow escapes in the past six months that they felt they owed it to themselves to get as drunk as they could in the least possible time and they started in to do it. In this praiseworthy effort they were assisted by both Barton and his bartender who showed no partiality in their offices. Over the tenth drink one of the prospectors, whose name was Scott, waxed confidential.

"Say—you—" He hooked the bartender by the collar. "I ain't aimin' to keep you standin' up all night. But—ain't you open kind o' late?"

"Nop."

The bartender wrenched loose, leaving a part of his collar in his questioner's grip.

"Mebbe it's kind o' early fer the night before last but it's just the shank o' the evenin' fer last night. What you want, friend?"

"First of all I want a drink."

He got it.

" 'N 'en I want the posh-masher."

"The—who?" demanded the bartender with reasonable surprize.

"Posh-masher—man what gits letters. You know. One 'at licks the shtamps. I ain't the mail-man, son, but up in Bear Creek Cañon where them wagons was jumped me an' my party foun' a lot o' things. Them Chiricahuas had sure raided 'em. There was one Mexican driver that looked like a pin-cushion he was so full o' arrers— They killed all the others too an' stole every derned thing. They even licked the paint offen the wagon-bows. Man! When we left, the dead mules was as big as elephants—all swelled up. But we got the mail——"

"What mail? What's this? I'm the postmaster. What're you talkin' about?"

"Talkin' about mail," said Scott glibly. "Them wagons was packin' mail out o' Los Angeles an' some of it was fer you all. Them Chiricahuas had cut open the sacks an' gutted most everything but we gathered up a lot of it an' brung it in on a pack-mule. There it is."

He pointed to a blue-and-white striped mail-sack that one of the men had thrown carelessly into a corner. Barton seized it and dumped the contents on the floor behind the bar. Scott, his attention distracted by the offer of a fresh drink, paid no heed to him. His mission was ended with the delivery of that mail-sack.

Barton sorted over the handful of letters that the sack contained and turned it upside down. A little parcel fell from the bag and struck the back of his hand. He picked it up and looked at the address and was still puzzling over the torn wrapper when the door banged open and Perkins entered from the rear of the bar. He was red-faced and angry beyond expression. Without a word to any one he motioned Barton into the back room where the few elect among the officers at the post were wont to play draw-poker on occasion. Barton followed him without a word, but even he was not prepared for the outburst of profanity that came from Perkins' lips. When he had cursed himself into breathlessness Barton grunted out:

"That's all right in its own way. but it don't help me none. What ails you?"

Perkins fought for breath. When he had gained it he spoke.

"I was sittin' in his office with Cap'n Burt. I'd just laid down the law to him about the Walters bid on that wood contract. He was plumb scared too. He'd gone to the safe an' he got the paper from the drawer an' he was just a openin' the envelope to give it to me when the door busted open and that —— of a Galvanized Captain come in an' pulled a gun on us both. He heard every word that both of us had said an' he come in like a house afire."

"Well?" Barton's voice was a curious mixture of rage and eagerness.

"—Like I say. He drawed a gun on us both an' he told us that if either you or me put in a bid on that contract he'd not only go to Major Lynch with the whole thing, but he'd make it a personal matter with you an' me. In fact he said he'd git us both. An' he meant it too, Jerry. Him an' Walters is good friends— He means it all right."

"Think so, do you? Well it happens that I'm interested some in this settlement an' I ain't aimin' to be run out by no Galvanized Rebel in the outfit. Even if he has got a bad name with a gun he's got nothin' on me. Don't you all worry none, Perk. You did the best you could."

"He said he wasn't goin' to Major Lynch unless you or me put in a bid on the contract," said Perkins again. "What's that?"

Perkins' eyes lighted on the package that still lay in Barton's hands.

"It's a package that belongs to His Royal Rottenness," said Barton grimly. "Them prospectors gathered up a lot o' loose mail that some fool shipped by wagon out o' Los Angeles for us. They was raided by the Apaches an' they cut open the mail-sacks. It's a cinch that I ain't goin' to break my neck gettin' this package to him. He kin wait and holler."

He tossed the package, that was wrapped in heavy brown paper, into a tiny safe that was built into the massive wall. When he had locked the door he turned again to his partner.

"I reckon I'll take these letters up to Major Lynch. He likes to get his letters as soon as he can. See you later, Perkins. Don't say a word to anybody about what happened."

"Huh! Think I'm plumb crazy?" demanded Mr. Perkins not without a show of reason as the door closed behind Barton.

The night was hot and the sounds of wassail rose high behind him as Barton hastened over to the post. The sentry challenged him sleepily; recognized him and let him pass and he picked his way over to the little house where Major Lynch still strode up and down.

"Hello Barton! Come in, man. Come in. What brings you up here at this time o' night?"

Barton wiped his face and entered the room.

"When those prospectors had sobered up enough or maybe it was when they got drunk enough to forget everything else they remembered that they found some looted mail over in Bear Creek Cañon, major. They turned it over to me an I sorted it out. There was a few letters fer you so I brung 'em over."

He laid the little heap of letters upon the table. Major Lynch picked them up eagerly. Mail was a rarity in those isolated posts in those days.

"Hm! Several from the War Department. I had begun to believe that they'd forgotten us. A private letter and three official ones. Wait a bit, Barton. Sit down, man—sit down and have a drink. Wait till I read the letters. There may be news for us all."

When they had drunk he slipped the long blade of a Mexican dagger under the envelope flap of the bulkiest letter and cut it open. A deluge of newspaper clippings fell out on the table. Before he could pick them up, Barton idly turned one over. The next moment he gave a shout that rang across the parade and made the startled sentry on Number One Post call the corporal.

"Whoop!" he yelled again and poured himself a Gargantuan drink. "Read that will you, major. Read it out loud!"

The startled Major took the clipping and read with bulging eyes:

WAR OVER!
LEE SURRENDERS ENTIRE ARMY!

Underneath the scare heading was printed the details of the most remarkable surrender of which history makes any mention. Remarkable because of the absence of all rancor on the part of the vanquished; remarkable because of the courtesy and consideration that were shown by the victor, surely the most gentle-hearted conqueror that a country has ever known.

"Let's see what the rest of the clippings say——"

So down they sat, commanding officer and bartender in the democracy of the West, which is the only real democracy, and read till they had mastered every word of those clippings. When they had read the last least word the old major spoke feelingly.

"I'm darned glad it's over now, Barton. It was a whale of a family row and now it's time to make friends again. I hope to Heaven now that the war is over that the South will fight as gallantly in peace as she did in war. If she does there is nothing that she can not do. Wait till we see what's in the letters, Barton. There may be more good news."

He opened a long formidable looking official envelope and read. Presently he looked up.

"Orders to release those galvanized soldiers of Mason's," he said jerkily. "That's bad. I hate to lose 'em before the new command gets here. It'll be several months before the First Cavalry can get here and we'll need every man we've got. They've done gallant work out here under unusual conditions and I'll hate to lose 'em. I am ordered to release 'em if they'll take the oath of allegiance. I don't know about the others but I fear young Mason won't take it—not unless his feelings have changed since a while ago. I hate particularly to lose him. He's the best field soldier I have ever seen."

Barton looked up quickly. He was suddenly anxious to know all that he could about Mason.

"I s'pose he'll go along with the others," he said briefly.

"They're all like the majority of Southern men back East about now," said Major Lynch. "What they'll become depends on how they're treated. Treat 'em like men and gentlemen who have been unfortunate and everything will come out all right. Treat 'em like some men like that man Stevens from New Hampshire would have them treated and they'll raise the —— for three generations. Mason swears he will shake the dust of the country off his feet. Don't want any more of it. He was talking of it this very night and he was pretty warm about it."

"What do you reckon he'll do? Leave when he can?"

"I doubt it." Major Lynch shook his head slowly. "Mason's case is different from the others. It seems that his father died some time ago while the boy was away with the army. The father left word that the home place was to be sold. So it was sold just after Mason had been taken prisoner and the funds were invested in securities. He got word not long ago that his lawyers were shipping the securities that they bought for him to him by mail. He hasn't got 'em yet. He'll have to wait to get them. I hope he waits till the new garrison arrives. I suppose after that he'll go to Europe or South America. What I'm really afraid of is that he'll go to some outland country like Nicaragua like Walker did and die as Walker died."

For Major Lynch who had learned really to like Ralph Mason had begun to fear that the war might have supplied the fire that was needed to ruin him instead of purging him.

Barton rose and walked slowly toward the door. A thought had come to him that was born of what Major Lynch had unwittingly told him.

"Must you go, Barton?"

"Yes, major, I'll be goin'. I've got some things to 'tend to at the store. I'd be a little careful if I was you, major—" He glanced swiftly at the barred windows in the room— "An Apache could sneak up here 'most any time and get you before the guard would ever know it."

Major Lynch laughed lightly.

"Hardly. It's pretty evident that you

don't think much of our guard. You're as bad as Mason. Good night, Barton. Much obliged to you for bringing the letters to me."

Leaving the upper half of the door open he went back to the up-turned box that served him for a desk and re-read the letters. Things had been bad enough before but now eight good men were being taken from him and none sent to replace them. And they were the best he had for the kind of work that he had to do. To be sure a new garrison was on its way but it would be several months before they could reach Critten, and when they had come it would be several months before they could be trained in the ways of the trail—wise enough in mountain-lore to be used in war against the Tinneh as the Apaches called themselves. Major Lynch sighed a little as he tilted himself back in his barrel chair. Then he rose and went outside the house.

THE young moonlight was streaming down on the little parade and in the silver radiance the *remadas*—the shaded porches built of poles and cottonwood branches in front of every house—stood out in great dark blots. Each house threw a broad square of blackness to the west. If there was a slight shadow that drifted like smoke along the front of each house in turn Major Lynch never saw it; neither did the guard and none of them saw a slender form that crept slowly along the line of the buildings waiting at each moonlit space till the next approach could be made unobserved. The soldier at the guard-house intent on playing cards heard and saw nothing and after one pause to observe them the figure crept more slowly along the edge of the parade under the cottonwood-trees; then still hugging the dusk stood for a second watching Major Lynch as he called a second cheery good night after Barton.

A step to one side to get a look at the sky to see if there was any promise of rain for that stricken land and Major Lynch was at the edge of the shadow thrown by his own *remada*. It was the moment sought by that lurking shadow. The next moment there was a short scuffle— A cough and a whirl of dust and the dull gleam of steel in the dim moonlight and a figure lay prone in the dust of the pathway. The next moment the shadow had drifted from the roadway and was swallowed up by the darker shadows of the plain outside the Post.

Two hours later Corporal Ryan posting the relief of the guard stumbled over the figure of a man before the door of Major Lynch's house. He hastily struck a match and investigated.

He sprang to his feet with a vitriolic oath.

"'Tis the meejor— Run Casey an' git the docthor— Call the guard— Quick!"

The wild whirl that followed was complimentary to the character of Major Lynch as a man but it did not help him as a patient. The doctor examined him carefully and turned sadly away to speak to Burt who was somberly regarding him.

"There is nothing to be done, captain. He has been dead two hours. Look for yourself. Three knife wounds in a circle no bigger than a saucer and all over the heart. Any one of them would have killed him instantly. He never knew what struck him——"

"Neither do we," said Burt shortly. "Who saw him last?"

He soon discovered that Barton and Ralph Mason had last seen him and he settled himself in the major's office and sent for both men. They came at once. He called Barton in first and questioned him carefully. Barton answered frankly—apparently. Presently he burst forth with:

"You're barkin' at a knot, captain, when you try to make it out that any one here had it in for Major Lynch. I only know eight men who could have had it in for him. How much do you reckon those Galvanized soldiers would keer fer the life of a Union officer? Have you seen the papers that the major got tonight?"

They had not. They gaped at him in astonishment. It was clear that they did not more than half-believe him. Barton told them and rammed home his words by showing them the newspaper clippings that the major had showed to him earlier in the evening. They stood astounded. For five years they had got only such odds and ends of news as wandering prospectors or belated letters brought to them, and events were always months old when they heard of them. They had begun to accept war as the normal condition of the country. And now it was over.

"I'm not sayin' it was any man but—who would naturally feel that he had a grievance?"

Burt looked at him. He was evidently greatly disturbed in his mind.

"The major said that those Galvanized soldiers will be discharged at once. He said that he didn't believe they would take the oath of allegiance. They'll all go—Mason among the rest."

Barton had thought very quickly. From his talk with Major Lynch he was very certain that Mason would only wait to leave till he could get that package that he had placed in his safe and that, now that he knew what the contents were, he had no intention of delivering it. Mason by his interference had prevented him from making a "pile" that would have meant ease for the rest of his life and it was only just that he should pay. If he should fail to deliver that package and Mason should leave the country— And no one could swear to that package. It had been a part of the looted wagon-train. At this point Mason came into the room and stood stiffly by the door. He had heard of the murder and his face was very set and white for he had had a soldierly fondness for Major Lynch and he was not a man to show his feelings. Moreover he did not care to discuss the matter with Captain Burt for whom since his experience with him earlier in the evening he had conceived a strong dislike and distrust.

"When did you see Major Lynch, Mr. Mason?"

Burt was punctilious in not recognizing any rank that had been bestowed by the Confederate States Government.

"About eight o'clock, sir."

He detailed his talk with the major.

"Did you see any one else in the vicinity of the house when you left?"

"I did not, sir. Mr. Barton was here apparently after I had left."

Barton spoke up.

"That's correct, sir. Major Lynch read his papers and then said that he was going to send for Captain Mason to tell him about the discharge of his men. Look there, sir."

He pointed a long lean finger at the Galvanized Captain and shot out:

"Ask him, Captain Burt— Ask Captain Mason how it happens that on this night when Major Lynch has been murdered on his own doorstep that his knife—Mason's knife is covered with wet blood? Hilt and haft has got blood on it."

He pointed to the long knife hanging at Mason's right hip. The eager men crowded forward in their interest and Sergeant Ames seized the knife and threw it on the table in front of Captain Burt. There was no doubt about it; haft and hilt were wet with great blotches of wet blood.

"And look there. There's dirt on the blade where he tried to clean it in the dark and failed."

Burt's face was grave. There was no doubt about the damning evidence.

"How came that blood on your knife, Mr. Mason?" he asked briefly.

"I gave my knife to one of my men to kill a horse with this evening."

"Why did you not shoot it?"

"Because I knew that a shot would stampede your recruits. I had Sykes kill the horse with my knife. Send for him, sir."

They sent for Sykes. It took perhaps fifteen minutes to get him from the store where he was already half-drunk. When the reason for his appearance was made clear to him he sobered instantly and answered every question frankly. Yes, he had taken the captain's knife. Yes, he had killed a horse with it. Where was the body? He hesitated a moment—Mason counted a great deal on producing the body of that horse. Then he remembered that Sykes had given it to the men in the Mexican camp.

"I gave it to the Mexican teamsters," said Sykes hoarsely. "They've cut it up and are jerkin' it right now most likely."

"Do you mean to tell me that you expect me to believe this absurd yarn?" asked Burt hotly. "That you borrowed the captain's knife and killed a horse with it; that you gave the body to the Mexicans and that it has disappeared? Pshaw! I'm not a fool——"

At which statement Yavapai Steve was seen to shake his head vigorously in dissent from Captain Burt's conclusion. Burt turned to Ralph.

"You must see Mr. Mason that there is nothing for me to do but to hold you for examination by the proper authorities on the charge of the murder of Major Lynch. I can do nothing else, sir."

"You have no evidence, sir," burst forth Ralph. "You know that I am no more guilty than you yourself are——"

"Sergeant—" Sergeant Ames stepped forward— "Take this man to the guardhouse and keep him there till I give further orders in his case."

"Move when the captain says move."

The sergeant touched Ralph on the shoulder.

There was no great love lost between Sergeant Ames and the Galvanized Soldiers who had been at no pains to hide their estimate of the "Blue-bellies" of the garrison. They left the room and Sykes seized Yavapai Steve by the arm.

"Where're you goin', Steve?" he dedemanded, for Steve with a muttered curse had started for the door.

"I'm aimin' to find out the truth of this," said Steve hotly. "I know that Captain Mason had no more to do with that killin' than me. An' I know that whoever done it left a trail if we kin foller it."

He strode out.

IV

THE more Yavapai thought over what had occurred the more certain he was that some prowling Indian had done the deed. It would be no very difficult thing for any Apache to sneak into the post between the stables and the corrals and to lie in wait for just such an opportunity as had presented itself. Of course the fact that Major Lynch had not been scalped meant to Burt and to men who did not know Indian customs that a white man had killed him. But Yavapai knew very well that the Apache was not as generally given to scalping as were the Eastern tribes. If they did it was a matter of individual taste and not necessarily tribal custom. The Apache were pretty much of a law unto themselves.

First light found Steve going over the ground with Sykes who was now entirely sobered. Captain Burt was also astir at daylight making an investigation on his own account. He met Steve as the old man came around the corner of Major Lynch's house.

"What're you after, Steve?" he asked.

"Well, sir, you see cap'n I kind o' got the notion that there may be a leetle more to this than showed on the top so I took my foot in my hand and come on over. I thought since you got young Mason locked up where he can't look out fer his-self that he might as well have a friend on the job. He's got nobody else here who keers a curse fer him now that the major's cashed in."

"Yes, and a nice friend Mason has been to the major. I didn't want to believe the evidence of that knife, Steve, but I can't help it.

"No—" Yavapai agreed with him. "A man cain't he'p the way he's made. If he could there'd be a whole lot of us that'd sure be different."

Burt flushed hotly. He felt that Steve was satisfied in his own mind that the investigation was not wholly impartial and how to make it absolutely impartial he did not know for he was aware that at the back of his mind was the feeling that anything that would get rid of Ralph Mason would rid himself of just so much danger and risk.

"Well," he said shortly, "where're you going to start?"

"Back o' the house I reckon," said Steve imperturbably. "When the murder was committed the moon was well up and the shadders was fallin' to the west—the house standin' on the eastern side. The man must've been hidin' on the west side of the house."

They walked around the house to the western side and examined the ground carefully. Yavapai went inch by inch over the soil below the windows and near the door. Under one of the little barred windows he paused.

"Look there, sir."

Burt stared hard at the place, but could see nothing till Yavapai pointed again.

"Don't you see it? The ground's been stirred up here. Every where else it's as solid as stone. Only one thing did that. Some one's been standin' on his toes tryin' to look in at the winder. If it had been a white man's shoe the ground would have been cut. A moccasin done that scufflin' over the gravel."

"Barton said that Major Lynch was sitting at his table reading his letters when he left," said Burt inconsequently. "He sent for Mason again after that—or Barton says he did. Said he was goin' to I mean," he added hastily for Yavapai seemed about to speak.

"That's right," Yavapai nodded his head. "Then he got up an' went to the door an' the man who was tryin' to look in at the winder sneaked around the house an' knifed him before he had a chance to get back. The winder's so close up under the eaves that the man couldn't use a bow an' a gun would have stampeded the garrison and brung the guard. Oh, it was well-planned all right. He sneaked around the house like this——"

Suiting his action to the word Yavapai crept close to the walls, turned the corner of the house and stood close by the cottonwood screen. Suddenly he pounced forward upon something at his feet.

"Look here will you!"

He pointed to a little flat stone on which some drops of blood had dried. The dark edges of the blood-crust were already curling up in the heat.

"All that could have been done by Mason," grunted Burt. "He wears Indian moccasins."

"Yeh."

Yavapai almost threw himself prone in the dust of the roadway.

"He wears moccasins but he don't use this."

And he held up before the uncomprehending eyes of Captain Burt a tiny stick about six inches long from which the pith had been punched. Burt took it and turned it over and over in his hands.

"What's this?" he asked finally.

"An' they send soldiers out to scout after the Inde in his own hills," grunted Steve scornfully. "That's an Apache drinkin'-stick. That's what it is, captain, and it tells me a whole lot that wasn't plain to me before. When the Tinneh—that's what the Apaches call themselves. They never heard the word Apache till the white man called 'em by it. They call themselves the Tinneh— When a Tinneh warrior goes on his first war-path he believes that he'll have bad luck if he touches drinkin'-water with his lips so he carries a tube like that to drink through. They do a lot o' things that nobody on God's earth would believe if they didn't know. They won't scratch themselves with the bare hand when they're on their first war-path. Every warrior on his first war-party carries with him a drinkin'-tube an' a scratchin'-stick. That tube in your hand is sure proof that the man who killed Major Lynch was a warrior on his first war-path. All the way into the post we was followed by men of Deltchay's band an' we know that that band is made up of young warriors. It's as clear as daylight to me now.

"All the way into the post they was trailin' us like I said. Then they hung around the place out in the hills an' took the chance that your guard would be asleep—like it was. Then after dark that warrior sneaked in an' the major just happened to be the first man he got a chance at. An' that —— had the nerve to——"

He placed the end of the drinking-tube to his lips and blew at the back of his hand. A few tiny drops of water beaded his skin.

"He had the nerve to stop an' git a drink o' water from the major's own *olla* after he had killed him. A fine guard you've got."

The last words were muttered between his teeth.

"Satisfied, captain? Is it clear now that it wasn't Mason?"

"Not by a long shot," snapped Burt. "It may satisfy you but I'll be —— if it satisfies me. You are entirely too thick with this so-called Galvanized Captain for me to take your statement as worth a darn. I'll hold him to prove his innocence before the proper tribunal."

The old man looked him up and down and somehow that glance scathed him as fire scathes a beech-tree.

"I ain't lived a whole lot among my own people in the last thirty years," said Yavapai slowly, "an' maybe I ain't up on the p'ints o' law like I'd ought to be but it seems to me, captain, that the law don't make a man prove that he's innocent. It's up to you to prove him guilty. That's Frontier Law anyway. No use talkin' more, sir. I reckon I'll be gettin' back to camp.

He turned away slowly.

"Tell those men of Mason's that I'd like to see 'em at the office will you?" Burt called after him.

Yavapai nodded abruptly and turned away. He had no respect for Burt and he did not propose to pretend that he had.

An hour later in his own office Captain Burt awaited the arrival of the Galvanized Soldiers. He had read very carefully the orders that had come concerning them. If they would take the oath of allegiance as citizens of the United States they were to be released at once. If they would not do this they were to be paroled and released. In any case they were to be given their freedom. He had pondered the matter from every possible viewpoint. He knew that these men gave willing allegiance to Mason alone and through him to Major Lynch and now that Major Lynch was dead he felt that they were utterly untrustworthy. If they could not be trusted in times when they had been amenable to military law they would be much worse now that there was no hold upon them. He wanted to see the last of them.

More than all the others he wanted to be rid of Ralph Mason for he alone knew of what had taken place in the office when Perkins had threatened him with exposure if he did not reveal to him the amount of Walters' bid on the wood-contract. The fact that Ralph knew it all made Burt wince. Of course Mason had said that he would say nothing about it but it would only need a word from him and his—Burt's—career would end. Nothing in this world so predisposes one man to dislike another as the knowledge that he is in his debt. An unrequited favor is legitimate cause for war. With Lynch dead and Mason in the guard-house charged with having killed him he felt that if these other men could be got rid of, that the whole affair would be buried and never heard of more.

He had now a grip on Mason that would do more than silence him. It would utterly discredit him. He knew that if Mason appeared before a court charged with murder that any damaging statements that he might make against him—Burt—would be attributed to revenge.

Burt had the grace to feel ashamed of the part that he was playing, but he reconciled himself to it by the plea that it was necessary. In a few days his daughter Margaret would arrive from the East and now of all times he must have a clean record. That record had been none too clean in the past, but Margaret did not know that. Even now he hated to think of the injustice of what he planned for Mason, but he must shut his mouth in such a fashion that it could never again be opened to his discredit. In any case it was most probable that the blood on Mason's knife was really from the dead major. Mason was more likely to have done it than any other man he knew. Yavapai's statement that the murder had been committed by an Indian was improbable.

Burt was a weak man, facile, pleasant when he elected to be, but above all else he was "ready to guard." His own welfare came first. If he had been accused of having deliberately formed an opinion adverse to Ralph and of having based that opinion on insufficient evidence he would have been properly shocked. He had convinced himself that Ralph was almost certainly guilty. During the brief interview that he had had with Mason he had been much shaken. His conversation with old Yavapai had stirred him up and he had fortified himself with three stiff drinks and the heady liquor was "biting." While he was still muddling over the matter, Barton entered the room. He dropped his hat at the door and came forward.

"Say, captain—"

He pulled a chair up to the desk.

"Hello, Barton. This is one —— of an unholy mess, ain't it?"

"It's pretty bad. About the major I mean. He was too derned good fer this country. Apart from that it's runnin' along all right. That's what I came up to see you about. This here man Mason fer instance. You got any particular use fer him, captain?"

Barton did not even hint at his own hot desire to get rid of Ralph Mason on any terms. That package that he had placed in his safe was a good reason—fifty thousand good reasons. No one knew what it was and he did not propose that any one should know. He knew the answer to his question before Burt spoke.

"I? You know I haven't. I just want to get rid of the whole outfit. Mason first of all and keep rid of him."

Barton rubbed his chin reflectively.

"That's how I figured you'd feel. Perkins told me what took place in your office."

Burt winced.

"Nobody will believe a word that Mason says after he's once held on a murder charge. What I'm gettin' at, captain, is this: You git rid of those men and soak Mason in the guard-house an' keep him there till you turn him over to the authorities. They'll put him where he won't talk none to speak of.

"A discharged prisoner of war held on a murder count will have no standin' before any court out in this country. Don't you see? You turn him in on a murder charge. He counters by sayin' that you an' Perkins was fixin' up a scheme to throw a contract into my hands. What's that got to do with the murder? It'll look like revenge. No sir, you needn't worry none. Just get rid o' them men and put Mason where he can't do no harm. Here come your men now."

He pointed through the open door and

across the parade ground where they could see Ralph being escorted by a sentry and still farther off the party of the seven Galvanized Soldiers slowly walking to the office, chatting as they came. The two parties met at the door. There followed a brief moment of awkwardness that Lee broke. He threw his hat upon the ground with a furious oath and burst forth:

"——, captain! We all heard that you was put in the calaboose by that pot-bellied bean-eater. We all're strong for you, captain. D'you want us to take you out? Just say the word, captain."

The others nodded in an eloquent silence. There was no need for a word. Ralph shook his head and grinned back at them, but his eyes filled. What a loyal crowd they were—that ragged, ruffianly loyal crew. He felt certain that Burt had in some manner unknown to him stacked the cards against him. They entered the office.

Burt looked them over as one might look over a prize lot of cattle.

"I have sent for you men to tell you what I have decided to do in your case. I have received orders that tell me to discharge you. The war is over—General Lee has surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox. Silence I say——"

But no word of his could silence the hum of astonishment and disbelief that ran from man to man. For a brief second they stood with eyes and mouths agape with wonder and disbelief. Then their eyes filled with great tears as without exception the hearts of the out-land men leaped suddenly back to the scenes of the home-land to which they could now return. Yet—how could they return? Where men that they had known and loved had poured out their heart's blood for a Lost Cause. Lee surrendered! It could not be!

Duryea openly snuffled. Lee looked as a steer looks when he has been struck across the nose with a stock-whip. Carter alone with up-flung head and blazing eyes gave him blank defiance.

"You're a liar," he burst forth. "A dirty liar! We've known you for a thief ever since you and that black-faced Judas Iscariot yonder—" He almost thrust his finger into Barton's eye—"cut in two the blankets that were sent you to be given to the Tontos to pay them for the treaty a year ago. We knew you were a thief before, but now I know you're a liar too. General Lee surrender! What? Marse Robert surrender to a Blue-belly? No suh. It ain't in the wood——"

In the sudden storm of passion that swept the group at Carter's words Ralph laid a restraining hand on Carter's arm.

"Shut up, Jake. You're wrong and the captain's right. What he says is true. The war is over. Captain Burt—"

He turned courteously to the furious Burt— "I ask your pardon for my men. What you have told them is enough to upset any man. It is a complete surprize to them."

Burt gulped visibly. He did not know how to comport himself under these circumstances.

"You men will be released at once from all further allegiance or duty to the Government. The oath of allegiance will be administered to you and you will be free to go."

"Go where?" asked Duryea.

"You can go to —— as far as I'm concerned. I only want to get rid of all of you. The same thing holds good for you, Mr. Mason. I will release you from your further obligations to the Government and take the oath of allegiance as a citizen——"

He hesitated a little as he looked sharply at Ralph who shook his head and smiled a little. There was a very distinct edge to that smile, but Burt did not appreciate it. There was something in it that suggested tears and suffering and a mirth over all at the mere suggestion that Burt's offer was to be taken seriously.

"I think not, captain. There's more between us than a bit of paper can set right. My people were citizens of this country before there was a Republic and after a good many years of your so-called citizenship they decided that they didn't like it. I don't mind being discharged as a prisoner of war, but I don't care about being a citizen of your country. You see I was one once and I know what it's worth. Not any for me, thank you."

"As you please." Burt's tone was gruff. "You will be given a parole as a prisoner of war. That will free you after you have answered to a civil court for the murder of Major Lynch. It only releases you now from your obligations as a paroled prisoner of war to serve as a soldier. Anything to say about that?"

"Yes. Plenty. But I would like to say it in private."

Burt could not refuse him. At his signal the wondering men stepped out upon the parade ground and stood in the sun-glare. Ralph stepped to the edge of the table and his eyes fairly bored into Burt's as he stared at him.

"Captain Burt, you know as well as I know that I am innocent of any complicity in the murder of Major Lynch. You know that he was the one man in this post for whom I had any respect. I don't know what your object is in trying to convince yourself that I have been concerned in this matter. There's something back of this—Unless—" A sudden light came to him—"Unless you're trying to railroad me so that you and Perkins and Barton can steal the place blind. You trifflin', pifflin' thief!"

The last word cut like a knife even through Burt's pachydermatous hide. He sprang from his chair with an oath.

"You—you—you common midnight murderer! You stabber of old men! I'll show you up for this. I'll put such evidence before the courts that they'll nail you up like a hawk to a barn-door. You men, come back in here."

When they had filed back into the room he glowered at them, trying to stare them down. It was an impossible task. They looked at him calmly as men might look at a toad, fearing it not at all.

"Well," he said shortly, "which is it to be? Oath of allegiance or parole? Which? It makes no difference to me. Speak up."

It was Sykes who answered for them all.

"We all sort of figure to stand by what we've done," he said slowly. "An' we'll stand by the captain, too. We've fought together, him and us. We've fought an' marched and camped and starved and feasted and got drunk together now for risin' five years. We've fought Blue-bellies and Injuns an' I reckon that men like you was the worst of the lot. Whoever it was who killed Major Lynch killed the only real man in this post—when we're out of it. If you're too rotten for the captain to have any truck with it's a cinch that we don't want you. Give us our paroles, captain, and let us go. All we ask is to be clear of you and yours."

"Where are you planning to go?" demanded Burt hotly.

"We own our own horses and rifles," said Duryea softly, watching Burt as a cat watches a mouse. "For two years now our rifles and our horses have kept us—and you. Where we all aim to go is none of your —— business. You make out what papers are needed to let us get clear of you. We won't take any oath of allegiance. We'll go. Now that Major Lynch is dead and you're tryin' to put a murder on an innocent man this is no place for decent men."

"Come here at five o'clock," said Burt shortly. He wanted to end it all. "I will have your papers all made out by that time. I want you all to be clear of the place by sundown. Take that man back to the guard-house," he growled to the sentry who was standing back of Ralph.

When the excitement had died away Barton came in from the backroom where he had been a careful listener to all that had been said.

"That's fine," he said heartily. "You'll be rid of the whole lot of 'em by night. This may be better fer you than you think for, Burt."

"What do you mean?"

Barton said nothing. He was thinking of that brown paper parcel that he had so carefully locked up in his safe. It meant just as much to him as it could mean to Ralph Mason, and the Galvanized Captain did not suspect that he had it in his possession.

V

ONCE back in their camp the seven Galvanized Soldiers went into caucus with Yavapai as an interested observer. More than once that caucus broke up into quarrelling groups led by Barr and Duryea. Passion swayed them as a wind sways poplars. They would do all manner of impossible things. They would storm the guard-house and deliver their captain, *vi et armis*. They would tar and feather old Burt. They would take refuge in the hills and make common cause with their erstwhile foes the Apaches against the garrison of the post. They would raid south into Mexico and capture and hold the country as Walker had raided into Nicaragua not many years before and maybe die as Walker died. It did not matter much.

What a doctor could do they could do, especially with Mason at their head. They would show the blasted Blue Bellies at the post that one man if he chose could make head against them especially if that man had fought under "Marse Robert." It was magnificent but it was pathetic too, and when they had fretted away most of the long hot hours of the day, and comparative quiet had come with the blue night, Yavapai spoke, soothingly at first for he would ride them at first on the snaffle. It was not likely that with these men he would need the spur. When the last word had died and they had settled into a deep-breathing silence Yavapai spoke:

"Now that you all have settled what you ain't goin' to do, I'll tell you what you've got to do. First of all we're goin' to git Mason outen that guard-house."

"Then what?"

Duryea shot the question. Fifteen minutes before he had been fighting mad with them because they would not start south to upset the Emperor Maximilian.

The old scout settled himself in his sandy seat and combed his beard with restless fingers.

"You see, fellers, it's this a-way: If Burt turns Mason over to the civil authorities fer trial on a charge of murder—Well gentlemen I'll tell you right now how it'll work out. Mason and every darned one of you are in bad with the Government. Why? Because you fought against the Government back in the East. All right! When Burt tells them that he gave you all a chance to take the oath of allegiance and that you wouldn't do it, will that give you a better standin'. You know it won't. If Burt turns Mason over fer trial he's as good as convicted before the trial starts. Will the court look on Mason as an innocent man when Burt says: 'Here's an ex-Confederate prisoner who wouldn't take the oath of allegiance who was sent out here to fight the Injuns. He's been a lot o' trouble ever since he came out here. One night old Major Lynch was found stabbed to death at his own door. He had been talkin' with Mason just before that and word came that Lee had surrendered and Mason was all upset. Mason's knife was found all covered with fresh blood.' What'll any court do when they learn that? I know he's innocent and so do you and I believe to God that Burt knows it too but—The first thing to do is to git Mason loose. A free man comes into court with clean hands. What'll we do when we've got him out?"

To the practical every-day mind of old Yavapai there was no doubt that he could do it. It was merely the aftermath that concerned him.

"Maybe we'd better leave that to the Captain," suggested Lee.

"Right. That 's what we'll do then. You boys stay here till I come back. I'm goin' down to the camp o' them prospectors for a while. They came over the trail after we did and maybe they can tell me somethin' later than what we know. If the tribes in the northwest are on the warpath we'd be takin' an awful chance to go that way. Feed your horses an' be ready to start if I need you. Beg, borrow er steal all the ca'tridges you kin git. We may need 'em all. I'll be back in a little bit."

THE prospectors' camp was empty and riot still held sway in Barton's store in Salsipuedes. The newcomers had bought a steer and were planning a barbecue. In the meantime they were arguing and between the arguments they were drinking whisky from tincups. Yavapai found them fighting, arguing, wrangling over the hot little bar in a drunken cocoon of profanity. Finally he managed to wrench one man loose from the others by main strength and pinned him back against the wall while he spoke.

"Kin you talk fer a minute?" demanded Yavapai breathlessly.

"I don't want to talk fer a minute" objected his victim. "I kin talk when I'm sober. Talkin's no good. Any —— fool kin talk. Look at yourself. Let's drink. My name's Scott."

"All right son." Yavapai's tone was amiability itself. "You all have just come in from the north, haven't you? Did you see much Injun sign out there? Beyond the Secaturas?"

Mr. Scott eyed him as a man might eye a man with three legs.

"Injun sign," he demanded. "Le' me tell you somethin' old man. Sign's as thick out there as rabbit tracks back East after a first fall o' November snow."

He seemed to recover his sobriety as some drunken men do on occasion.

"We all was lookin' fer the Lost Cabin Mine. We went out o' Lordsburg and made a big circle to the northwest. Le' me tell you, I b'leeve all the Apaches what was ever foaled has gone on the war-path. What's got into 'em?"

"A whole lot o' things, son.

Yavapai poured himself a copious drink. He very delicately decanted a few drops upon the thirsty floor. Asked why he did it he would have said that it was 'To git rid of the ile'. As a matter of fact it was a purely atavistic act by which he poured a libation to the Gods of Chance.

"I don't love the Apaches a derned bit. Make no mistake about that. But—" And he swore a certain very solemn oath—"If I was an Apache I'd go on the war-path too. They're gittin' the same kind of a deal from the white man that every other tribe has got since this land was first diskivered. Their land is took from 'em because some drunken loafer finds gold er fur on it. Their game is killed off by skin-hunters. Their treaties are busted. Oh yes, I know that they break 'em too. I've lived out here fer more 'n thirty years an' I tell you right now that nobody ever has had any trouble with the Injun till he meets up with some that have had dealin's with the white man. Washin'ton sends 'em gifts and them gifts melts away in each hand that they pass through. I ain't defendin' the Apaches. Dern 'em! I'll kill one every time I git my rifle sights on him but I do say that I don't blame him fer goin' on the war-path. But you ain't told me what I want to know. Kin I git through to the line o' the Colorado River?"

"Kin you?" demanded Mr. Scott scornfully. "Kin you stick your hand in a hornet's nest without gittin' stung? Then you kin git to the Colorado River wearin' your hair. You got a right nice head o' hair fer a old man," he added reflectively. "It'd make about seven good scalps fer an Apache."

"The Apaches don't scalp often," said Yavapai.

"They don't have to scalp—often" mimicked Mr. Scott. "Once is enough fer me. We had a fine time gatherin' up the plunder where they cut up the Greaser wagon-train in Bear Creek Cañon. They scalped three men there all right. You heard about that didn't you?"

Yavapai shook his head.

"I heard a little bit about it," he said; "but you was drunk when you said it."

"Then I told the truth," said Mr. Scott triumphantly. "When a man's drinkin' he don't know no better'n to tell the truth. That train was jumped in the cañon where the walls run straight up an down an' the wagons was all burned up. We found where the 'Paches had even cut open the mail-sacks that the wagons was packin' out of Los Angeles. They was scattered over ten acres among the scrub. We had a —— of a time gatherin' 'em up but we done it. All the letters that was ever wrote in the world was there I reckon. I wonder what people kin find to write about. Then there was a kind of a package that was fer that feller Mason. I wonder if he got it all right. You ask him when you see him, will you?"

Some special genius prevented Yavapai from speaking. Scott went on:

"I heard somebody say today that Mason was waitin' to git a package that was due to come fer him by mail. Maybe that's it."

"Mm. I'll ask him when I see him. They've got him locked up right now. Captain Burt swears that Mason murdered Major Lynch the commadin' officer. He was killed last night you know."

Scott nodded; this time soberly.

"That's plumb ridiculous," he said jerkily. "Everybody what don't know Mason out here knows *of* him. We know of him. You kin bet on that. He's the man who cleaned out Esperan's *rancheria* last year. It was his gang of what they call the Galvanized Soldiers that run Little Cochise into the Chevelon's Fork country an' brung Jane Dyer back when they was plannin' to sell her to the Cocopas fer five ponies. —— man! Mason never touched Lynch. That ain't his kind. I don't keer what they say. I wouldn't believe it if I'd seen him do it."

As Scott recounted one by one the acts in which Yavapai had taken part the old man's eyes brightened and his glance was warm with friendship.

"Why don't you all take Mason outen that guard-house?" demanded Scott truculently.

Yavapai looked properly shocked. Scott went on—

"You could do it just as easy as I kin drink this whisky."

He tossed it off at a gulp.

"Didn't seem to be no difficulty in doin' that," commented Yavapai. "How 'd you go about it?"

Scott grinned affably at him.

"If I was you I'd go to an old prospector name o' Scott who's just come in from the hills an' I'd tell Scott just what you've told me. I bet that old Scott would have a barbecue down to his camp an' that all the soldiers from the post would be there to celebrate the fact that the war's over. Then I wouldn't be surprized if a fight was to start er somethin' that'd call the guard from the guard-house so they'd be short o' men there. You see the major was killed last night an' if a shot was fired they'd be sure to think somebody else was gettin' killed. They'll stampede at a shot er I miss my guess. Well then I'd either rush that guard-house er—er—somethin'."

"Good man!"

Yavapai smote him between the shoulders.

"What time are you aimin' to have that party, Scott?"

"As soon as I kin arrange to have a barrel o' liquor sent down to the camp an' send word to the post fer all the soldiers to come on down? Good luck, ol' man."

Scott turned away and Yavapai left the store with a light heart.

At the camp he found the seven men awaiting his return. The horses had been watered and fed and were noisily champing their grain on the picket-line. The men had made up their packs, so great was their confidence in Yavapai. Very briefly he outlined his plan. They listened eagerly.

"First of all," said Carter, "I'll go over and get the paroles for all of us from the captain. When we 've got them, we can go where we please and do what we want to do. We can thumb our noses at old Burt when we've got those papers. I'll go get 'em."

He found Captain Burt in his office. In response to Carter's request he thrust an envelope across the table to him.

"There they are—paroles for all of you except Mason. I'll give him his when the court has turned him loose."

This was a facer. Without a parole Ralph would be no better than an outlaw.

"I'd like a copy of Mason's parole to send back to his people in the East if you don't mind, captain. They'll set some store by it. It'll show that he was released from Yankee military service.

Burt demurred a little but finally made a copy of the paper and gave it to the jubilant Carter.

"When are you men going to leave?" asked Burt gruffly.

Carter's manner changed. He was no longer the subordinate private soldier.

"When we all get good and ready," he said shortly. "Maybe tonight, maybe next month. Why?"

"Understand me—" Burt leaned over the desk and shook his finger almost in Carter's face—"I want you all off this reservation by sundown."

"Huh! Don't bust a trace wantin', captain. We ain't on your payrolls now. As long as we keep off your little old parade ground we can go where we choose. Unless you feel like *drivin'* us off," he added truculently. "Come to think of it, captain, there's nothin' we'd like quite so much as to have you all drive us off. Try it, sir. Just once," he added invitingly.

Burt knew that he spoke the truth. Those seven men cared for nothing in this western world but themselves and Ralph Mason. They feared neither man nor devil and since he had told them that Lee, their idol, had surrendered, a fight with the recruits of the garrison would be "cakes and ale" to them. They felt that the redemption of the good name of the extinct Confederacy as a fighting unit lay with them. It was ridiculous, but it was true. He temporized.

"Well, get out as soon as you can. I don't want you here."

"We ain't hardly considerin' you, captain," said Carter softly. "We've been sort o' talkin' of huntin' for the Lost Cabin Mine. We figure that we can locate it."

He left Burt gasping. This news that Carter had accidentally given of their plans was more than welcome. If those seven men should go of their own accord to look for the mythical Lost Cabin Mine they would never appear again. The Apaches would see to that. He drew a long breath of relief and took a drink.

As a matter of fact Carter had given no thought to what he was saying. He spoke of the Lost Cabin Mine as casually as Jason may have spoken of the Golden Fleece to the heroes grouped about their fire while it was yet a matter of common talk; before it was ever determined to search for it. For two long years Carter had heard men speak of the Lost Cabin Mine.

It was supposed to lie somewhere in that vague uncharted northeast in the Tonto Basin behind the hills. There were other tales too—tales of other places just as mythical; notably the lost mine of El Salero where the priest in charge when he wished to impress his bishop with the wealth of the place sent two men into the diggings to get a lump of virgin silver from which they hammered a huge basin for the bishop. These were only two of the tales that the Galvanized Soldiers had gleaned in the two years of their wanderings over mesas and mountains and they believed those tales implicitly. Now they were foot-loose and could investigate them for themselves.

Carter went back to his camp and they waited for two hours. Suddenly Yavapai held up a hand.

"Hear that! That feller Scott is sure doin' his share."

A shrill burst of ear-piercing shrieks that would have done ample justice to any Apache split the air. Scott's hospitality was taking hold.

"In another hour the whole camp'll be too drunk to move. You all might saddle up now."

In five minutes it was done and they waited on him again.

"Now boys—You, Barr, take the ponies down to the stream and give 'em a last drink. When they've drunk, move back in the shadders and wait for us. Fenton, you take the three pack-mules along with the ponies. Duryea, you an' Lee an' Carter come with me. One of you ride; the other two walk. You won't need your guns—only your pistols. Let the one who rides bring his lariat an' I want a big stick."

He searched through the camp till he found the stick that he wanted, a log about six feet long and as big as his leg. The others eyed him questioningly as he tied his lariat to the middle of it. He grinned at them but vouchsafed no speech.

THE little party moved down to the stream with Lee and Carter padding along on foot. When they had crossed the stream the old man buttonholed his companions and spoke in a low whisper. They nodded comprehendingly and finally burst into low laughter. When he stopped talking they moved on again softly in the dark for they did not intend to be heard by the heavy-footed sentry. When the last least noise of the departing ponies had died away Yavapai turned to his companions.

"All set now. Carter, I want you and Lee to cross the creek and go down among the piles of the cord-wood. Hide among the piles and fire a few shots. It won't be necessary to fire more'n a couple. Fire a few shots an' yell like you're bein' scalped. Raise ——, Carter! I want the guard to think that the post is bein' jumped from that side."

Carter nodded briefly.

"Come on, Lee. I *sabe*, Steve. You'll hear from me in a little bit."

They disappeared in the night and five minutes later the very earth seemed to rock in a series of shrieks that were punctuated by rapid shots as a dozen pencils of flame stabbed the dark. Then a tongue of flame licked up against the sky. Carter had done better than he had been told. He had fired the cord-wood piles. Yavapai swore admiringly.

"I never thought of that," he said. "That'll bring 'em out fer sure."

It did. A quick cry from number one was followed by a shot and then a shrill summons—

"Turn out the guard!"

Yavapai, listening as if his very salvation depended upon his hearing, heard a quick sputter of gravel on the road as the officer of the day dashed up. Followed a quick questioning.

"Where? Down by the wood-piles? It may be another murder. Get your men down there at once, sergeant. My Lord, men! Turn out. Are you petrified in your hind-legs? Where's the rest of the command?"

Yavapai was very certain where they were. They were over in Scott's camp where Scott was striving in all hospitality to make them drunk.

With a curt "Come on" to Duryea he forced his pony across the stream and up under the shadow of the six-foot bank on the very lip of which stood the guardhouse. Like every other building in the post it was built of adobe bricks and like all adobes they were made of a uniform size; eighteen inches long by twelve wide and four inches thick. There was but one window in the cell-room; an aperture some five feet long and two feet wide that was placed well up under the eaves so that rain should not strike on the walls and so melt them down.

This window was grilled with seven iron bars set in the heavy adobe walls top and bottom. With a knife an able-bodied man could have dug his way clear in two hours, but Yavapai was very confident that the guard would have taken Mason's knife. He knew a simpler way.

"Gi' me your lariat."

He knotted the loose end of Duryea's lariat to the middle of the stick along with his own, climbed like a cat to the top of the bank and paused beneath the window of the cell-room. He made two casts before he succeeded in doing what he wished—getting the long heavy stick through the bars of the window. He had to work swiftly because the sentry would make a turn around that guard-house from time to time. When the stick finally slipped through the bars and caught he backed down over the edge of the bank and tossed the loose end of the riata to Duryea.

"Take a turn of it around your saddle-horn and when I say 'Pull'—you pull!"

"All right."

Duryea threw a half-hitch over his saddle-horn and gathered up his reins, leaning forward in his saddle with his eyes on Steve.

"Bend to it now," Yavapai grunted. "Pull!" he whispered.

They drove their spurs in deep and the startled ponies surged forward, the tautened lariats slapping sides and saddle-flaps as they took up the slack.

"Again! It's givin'. Pull you ——."

Something gave way suddenly with a rush and Yavapai's pony blundered to his knees. The old man landed on both feet and picked up the panting pony with his spurs.

"Wait here," he said curtly. "I'm goin' back to see what's happened."

Duryea, holding the frightened ponies, was aware of a frenzied yell from the guard-house as the sentry discovered that the back had been pulled out of his guard-house. It was quickly followed by a shot. Then [illegible] as he realized that his prisoner had escaped.

At the stream-bank Yavapai almost stumbled over the dark figure of a man creeping up over the lip of the creek. He hailed him in a low whisper:

"That you, Mason?"

"Yes. That you, Yavapai. Thank the Lord ——"

"Down this way, captain. I've got the ponies down below. The packs are all made an' we're ready to hit the trail."

Without a word Ralph followed him, Duryea with the two ponies falling in behind them. For five breathless minutes they scrambled through the delaying hands of the mesquite-scrub. They knew that they must hurry for pursuit would begin just as soon as a dozen sober men could be got together. At the ford Fenton gave a low whistle.

"Here we are. Here's your horse, captain. Good luck, sir."

Ralph gripped his hand and swung into the saddle.

"Which way now, Yavapai? You've engineered this thing. It's up to you to tell us where to go."

Yavapai held up a warning hand and growled—

"Listen to the yellin', will you. Look at 'em!"

Lights were dancing across the parade ground all centering on the guard-house and loud shouts and yells came to them across the night. The whole post and the town of Salsipuedes as well was aroused.

"Let's get away and into the hills," said Yavapai shortly as the two men came back from the wood-piles. "We've got to get where we can git water fer the horses. We kin make up our minds later what we mean to do. Come on, men."

He forced his pony into a lope and they fell in behind him. Keeping to the soft ground beside the trail the drumming hoofs made no sound. Not a sound broke from them, but an occasional snort from a restive pony or the sharp creak of a rifle scabbard against a saddle as they rode into the night.

VI

THE steamer *City of Yuma* was crowded on her last trip from San Francisco. She would not make another trip before the rainy season would open and that closed all river-traffic. That rainy season meant for any steamer a steady up-hill fight across the flat alluvial plain through which the Colorado River forces its way to the Gulf of California. In the dry season the tawny mass of the river struggled like a drowning man fighting for breath in its fight to get through the riverbed, but when the rains came; when every river from Fort Mojave to the Green River was discharging from full banks into the hungry gorges of the Colorado, the river would run like a surcharged sewer and against its muddy mass no steamer could make any headway.

The *City of Yuma*, with her great twenty-foot wheel astern, kicked her way through the shallows and across the flooded mud-flats to the landing. A dozen men caught her lines and slipped the wet loops over the pilings that stood up like bad teeth and the steamer slowly sagged in to a landing. The moment her rail touched the wharf-edge there was a sudden rush of eager passengers to disembark and the narrow gangway was jammed.

All sorts and conditions of men crowded to the little deck. Prospectors intent on making immediate fortune were there; gamblers; traders and worse; men of no calling who had seeped through the edges of civilization as water seeps through the edge of a garment; all had braved the hardships of the trip for various reasons that concerned themselves alone. Close by the railing of the upper deck two women stood quietly watching the crowd that was surging to the rail.

In 1865 travel was not even partially gilded. The trip to Yuma had been fully as uncomfortable as Margaret Burt had been warned it would be, but the sight of the landing-stage and the solid land behind it banished all recollection of the painful hours when the miserable little steamer had wallowed, as Mrs. Ames had put it, "Like a hog in a trough" in the long Pacific roll off Cabo San Roque. Mrs. Ames spoke to Margaret.

"'Deed, Miss Margaret, I'm sorry we ever came down here. When Ames wrote an' told me that he had a house fer me I thought there was somethin' wrong about the whole deal but since I've saw what they call houses in this forsaken place I aint surprized so much. Goodness knows if it wasn't fer you I'd take me foot in me hand an' go back if I had to walk on the water most of the way. What did the United States ever take this land fer anyway, Miss Margaret? Answer me that? It's bad enough fer grown men an' soldiers to be here, but to drag you out here—You a girl just out o' school an' a me a gray-headed old tub-wrangler what ought to know better but don't. An' they tell me that this Fort Critten is three or four days trip from here. An' I thought *this* was the jumpin' off place!"

"My father will meet us here," said Margaret confidently. "He wrote me that he would. Don't you remember what Sergeant Ames wrote to you, that he had a house and a —a—What was it?"

"Yes," Mrs. Ames sniffed. "An' I remembered him tellin' me that the Mexican girls wrapped their faces up in their *tortillas* till I found out that *tortillas* was pancakes. I'll joke him when I lay me hands on him."

"Oh look, Mrs. Ames! There're several real mountains over there. Fort Critten must be beyond them, if it's several days travel to the post."

She pointed to the craggy masses of the Gila Mountains that blocked the eastern skyline. Margaret seized her companion's arm.

"Come on, Mrs. Ames. The gangway is all clear now and here's the boy to carry our valises."

The dirty-faced *muchacho* that the mate had sent to them grinned knowingly and twitched at the one doubtful suspender that held up his trousers. He seized the two valises and fell in behind the older woman as she followed Margaret down the narrow companionway. As they passed through the crowd at the beach end of the landing-stage the girl was conscious of approving glances. Not often did the hangers-on at Yuma City see women of this type. Pretty women were not rare. They came up by every boat but they did not stay long. They either married and were immured in their own kitchens or else they went back to San Francisco after one look at the place. In either case the habitués saw them no more.

"*Adonde señorita.* Where to, miss," demanded the grinning youngster.

Margaret stared helplessly at him. She knew no word of Spanish.

"I want to go to a hotel," she said desparingly.

He gaped at her as a terrier grins demanding that a stone be thrown anew.

"Don't you speak English?" she demanded with exasperation speaking very slowly for his benefit.

His face brightened.

"*Si señorita.* Me spika *bueno* Inglis. I *habla bueno* Inglis ——!"

"For the land's sake!" ejaculated Mrs. Ames. "Where did that child ever pick up language like that? Ames ain't here," she added irrelevantly.

The child looked at her in amazement. Why on earth should any one object to words that every packer used? While he was still staring at her a man stepped forward from the crowd whose open mirth caused Margaret to grow warm with embarrassment.

"Le' me help you, Miss. My name's Wheelock. I'm a miner after a fashion. Do you want a hotel?"

"Thank you, yes," Margaret gasped. "That's exactly what I want. Is there a good hotel here?"

"Well Miss—" Wheelock considered for a little. "I'm no man to take away a hotel's character but the Yuma Hotel's as good as any. It's over yonder."

He gave some quick directions to the boy that started him off at a run. Then he turned again to Margaret.

"It's a pretty rough place fer a young lady, miss. If I kin be of any use to you holler. I'm livin' at the Yuma myself."

He disappeared again in the crowd.

Like nearly every other building in the place, the hotel was built of adobe; a low rambling structure erected around three sides of a square. In the *patio* an adobe-walled well supplied water to the hotel and to such families as chose to come for it. In the sun-baked flower-beds a few stalks of fire-crowned ocatilla and some scattered nopal plants—Indian figs—absorbed the blinding heat. It was scorching hot in the *patio* and Margaret drew a breath of relief when she entered the cool darkened interior of the house. At the desk a courteous Mexican clerk handed the register to her. When she had signed her name he whirled the book around to read it.

"Oh, ah—Mees Burt. There ees a letter here for you. A soldier brought it here this morning."

"A soldier?"

Margaret took the letter that the clerk handed her. She looked at it uncertainly.

"Where is the soldier please?"

"One moment mees. I will look in the barroom. He is probably there."

While the clerk was looking for the soldier, Margaret read the letter. When she had finished it she turned in consternation to Mrs. Ames.

"He says that it has been impossible for him to come in for me and that he has sent Corporal Kelly with an ambulance and three soldiers and that we must leave at once to return to the post. Corporal Kelly is in charge."

"Maybe that's him there, Miss Margaret."

Mrs. Ames pointed to a soldier who was entering the office hard on the heels of the clerk.

He was a short, stockily built youngster dressed in the cavalry uniform of the period—blue cloth trousers that were tucked into very ungainly black "butcher boots;" a natty blue shell-jacket that terminated in a point behind and a narrow-visored forage-cap. He removed his cap as he came forward.

"Oi'm Corp'ral Kelly, Miss. This is Miss Burt, isn't it?"

"Yes."

Margaret held out a slim, cool hand.

"I'm glad to know you, Corporal Kelly."

Mrs. Ames gasped. According to her lights this was a slip. Margaret apparently knew no better than to greet a mere soldier as a man.

"I have just received Captain Burt's note," said the girl. "He says that we are to leave at once. When can we leave, corporal?"

"Well miss, sure we kin lave at once like you say. I got in yesterday an' the mules are fresh."

"How long will it take us to reach the post?"

"Four days, miss, onless we have extra good luck. There're ranches along the trail where you an' the lady kin sleep. You won't have to camp. We'll make Est's ranch tonight—Long's tomorrow—Stevens' the next day an' thin into the post. Will ye be wishin' to lave at once, miss?"

"If you please, corporal. Just as soon as you can."

"Thin ye'd betther get breakfast before ye shtart, Miss, an' be sure ye make thim put up a luncheon fer the two av ye. It is none too good at the ranches. I'll git the trunks, miss."

He took her checks and was gone.

The dining-room was crowded but cool and the two women felt the eyes of the dozen or more habitués upon them as they quickly eat the meal. The crash of wheels on the road outside the house drew most of the idlers to the door and when Margaret and Mrs. Ames reached the *patio* a half-dozen men had gathered about the heavy ambulance. On the leather-covered seat high above the four mules Andres, the sombrero-crowned Mexican, smiled contentedly behind a cigaret, and four soldiers loafed in their saddles behind the wagon. Corporal Kelly had lost no time.

In a moment the two women had sprung into the ambulance and they were off at a trot across the flat plain to the east making for the passes of the steep Gila Range that stands up like a barrier along the eastern horizon.

That plain stretches from the banks of the Rio Colorado to the lowest slopes of the Gilas in mile after mile of raw, red land before it swallows up the hills and lowers again into the Lechuguilla Desert wherein every point is below sea-level. Fresh from California, Margaret had never seen a land like this and the four sweating troopers riding at ease behind the team grinned amusedly as one or the other of the passengers thrust an inquiring head out at the door to see some new wonder; the statuesque pithaya with its delicious looking fruit; the bulky biznaga that the Mexicans so deftly turn into delicious sweetmeats; the tall slender beauty of the palo verde with its ivory bloom; the nopal—Indian fig—and the bristly horrors of the yellow-tufted cholla all were new to them. The rains were not yet, but the plains were getting ready for them. In a month that broad expanse of sandy soil would be carpeted with flowering grasses, knee-deep with palmilla, bear's grass, mesquite grass that curls like the finest hair and the coarse sacaton that, unless eaten when it is very green, kills grazing stock.

Something of the history of the land Margaret had read when she had found that she was to make her home there but she found the actuality depressing. It was over these sun-scorched plains that Coronado had marched with the mail-clad soldiery of old Spain. It was here, over perhaps this very Pass that Padre Escalante had come; where Fray Marco of Nice had marched when he had learned from the Indians of Siboyla that wonder-bearing land that the good Fray confused with the legend of the seven cities of Cibola that Coronado sought to his fall.

They drove for miles till the heavy breathing of the panting mules bade them make their noon halt. They ate their luncheon. It was a huge four-ply sandwich made of four layers of butterless bread with alternate layers of cold fried egg, cheese and jam, and they washed it down with copious draughts of blood-warm water from a huge canteen that Corporal Kelly had thoughtfully covered with a blanket in the bottom of the ambulance to keep it cool. It *was* cool. Cooler than fire.

"All ready, miss? Thin we'll be pullin' out again. The mules are makin' good time. Look yonder, miss."

He pointed to a tiny heap of stones that stood by the edge of the trail. In the center of the heap stood a little cross made of two dried cactus twigs that stood out in strong relief against the sands of the desert.

"What is it, corporal?"

Kelly crossed himself.

"Sure 'tis the grave av some poor chap killed be thim —— Apaches. The trail is lined with thim, miss."

Margaret gazed about her apprehensively, and unconsciously drew closer to Mrs. Ames. Kelly noted the movement and grinned reassuringly.

"Shure, miss, ye need have no fears. Ye've got four men wid ye, not countin' the dhriver. 'Tis only eight miles now to Est's *rancho*. We'll make it in an hour."

Kelly was Irishly optimistic. It was almost dark when they drew up at the tiny adobe house where Simon Est had dug a well when his cattle had died and set him with his wife afoot on the desert. He had never had the nerve to leave that well. Thus was the West settled.

His wife welcomed the two women warmly, and set before them the best she had; bacon and Mexican frijoles with corn-meal *tortillas* that they learned to roll up into scoops to carry the beans to their mouths.

The second day was a red-hot repetition of the first, only Long's *rancho* was more pretentious than Est's. Long had five men with him. Late that night after the women had gone to bed Long drew Kelly aside.

"I suppose you think you know your own business best, son," he said gravely. "But man you've no right to take two women along the trail the way things are just now."

"Oi'd like to know why the —— not!" Kelly's tone was combative.

"Why not?" Long looked at him amazedly. "Why man don't you know—Haven't you heard that Deltchay's on the war-path? Well, he is. He raided down into Bear Creek Cañon a day or so ago, and cut up a wagon-train."

Kelly laughed.

"Here today an' gone tomorrow," he said gaily. "Shure Oi can't be keepin' the young lady from her father Misther Long just bekase a painted 'Pache takes it into his head to crease a greaser. By the Rock o' Cashel, Oi'd take 'em through if Cochise himself was in front o 'me. I've got four men—and the dhriver."

"Yes, and I'm not sayin' that they ain't good men, but they don't know Indians. You don't know 'em yourself, corporal. You may be all right but ——"

And old Ben Long shook his head perplexedly. He was not convinced.

In spite of his brave words Corporal Kelly neglected no precautions when they left the *rancho*. They left at daylight and by noon they had covered most of the thirty miles to the Stevens ranch. One man was kept ahead of the ambulance with orders to be always on the ridge ahead before the mules were pushed across the flat. The other three men rode to right and left keeping clear of the whirls of dust that the wagon raised. But not even Kelly, good man that he was, and he was the best that Fort Critten boasted, could compete with men whose very lives were made up of wiles and strategems.

The Stevens *rancho* lay on the eastern edge of a flat plain that stretched to the lip of a nearly dry arroyo that was a roaring torrent in the rainy season. The house was a one-roomed adobe cabin that was roofed with sacaton grass held in place by means of riatas of rawhide hung over the ridgepole holding great rocks on the grass. As the ambulance lifted over the western edge of the mesa Corporal Kely saw the house and his spirits rose.

"Here we are, miss. Yonder's the house! Hey there! What's gone wrong with Allen?"

For Allen, riding well in advance, had suddenly reined his horse to a halt and was studying the trail under his horse's feet. A moment later he flung up his hand with his carbine held horizontally in it. It was the cavalry signal for "Enemy in sight."

"My ——! Look to things, Bryson! I'm goin' forward ——"

Before the wondering Margaret could catch her breath Kelly was away at a gallop and was swallowed up in a cloud of red dust. When it settled again she saw Kelly rein up his horse by Bryson who was pointing to the trail. The corporal dropped from his saddle and ran a few paces from the trail. Almost instantly he was back in his saddle and was waving wildly to the driver to come ahead.

Uncertainty caught the others like a flood. What was it? What could it forbode? No good! That was certain for good never happened in this terrible land. Andres, the Mexican driver, sweating like a startled horse, "poured leather" into his lathering mules and they clanked down upon Kelly. He motioned to them not to pause but to make for the house.

"On to the house wid ye. 'T is a good half mile."

"What?"

Margaret began a question but a full-mouthed oath from one of the soldiers cut her short.

"Look to the north, corporal. My ——! There they come! It's Apaches on the war-path. See 'em!"

His shaking finger pointed northeastward beyond the house where an arroyo made a sharp turn to the west. Kelly took one fleeting look.

"Git to the house!"

He struck the near mule with his carbine butt.

"You men get ahead an' cover the team. Quick now! We've got to bate thim —— to the house. Andres, whin ye git there see that the grub an' the canteens is put in the shack. Good ——! look at thim come! One—two—three ——"

He counted fourteen dark figures running like antelopes across the yellow plain making for the house, intent on reaching it before the soldiers. He had no need to look again. He knew them for what they were—Apaches of the hills; the most implacable foes that the Western plains have ever seen.

Bumping and crashing over rocks and ruts and holes the ambulance rocked like a boat in a sea-way throwing the frightened women to right and left. Once Margaret uttered a terrified exclamation as her head struck a stanchion. Mrs. Ames prayed volubly on intimate terms with her Maker. They too had seen that dark line and they knew by instinct that it meant danger. Strangers generally mean danger in the desert.

Bellies to earth the mules fairly flew but they led by a scant two hundred yards when Andre with a fervent appeal to all the saints in Heaven threw the mules upon their haunches before the door of the house. No one ever knew how it happened but instantly the seven; two women and five men found themselves inside the house with the door barred, looking at each other.

Outside the house the crazed mules again took up the trot; then a gallop and then getting wind of the trickle of water in the nearly dry arroyo they broke for it in a head-long run while the horses trotted slowly out upon the plain.

"See what they're doin'."

Kelly worked a brick loose from a loop-hole and thrust his face in the opening. Instantly a shot rang out and a bullet wheeped into the wall beneath his chin. He sprang back with an oath.

"One man to a loop-hole on each face o' the house," he shouted. "If ye see a head shoot it! Kape well back from the loop-holes so they can't see ye. What 's that?"

A shriek of agony that there was no mistaking shrilled out in the hot air. It was the death cry of a wounded horse. The next moment a volley of shots rang out and a dozen bullets thudded into the walls and door.

VII

FOLLOWING the first outburst of shots silence fell. Corporal Kelly, moving quickly from wall to wall planning his defense, knew that he would have his hands full if the attackers were in sufficient force to push the attack home.

The place was not at all adapted to defence which in all probability Kelly thought was exactly why old Stevens had abandoned it on the first word of warning about an outbreak of the Apaches.

"He's gone into the fort, o' course," muttered the little Irishman. "When we came through here five days ago he was here. If he'd gone to Yuma we'd most likely have heard of him. He's hit for the post. That's it. I wonder when he went——"

There was none to tell him that old Stevens had simply taken pack and pick and had started south to investigate a rumor of good ore in the Mexican fields. Rumors of an Apache raid had simply made his going more timely. The tin bucket that stood upon the table and that was half-full of alkali water would have told Kelly the date Stevens had left if Kelly could have read the mute evidence of the muddy water, but Kelly could not read it and he did not know that alkali water takes about three hours to settle. All that he did know was that with two women and five men he was penned up in a twelve by fourteen adobe hut that had a sacaton grass roof that was as dry as tinder. A dome-shaped adobe oven detached from the house stood about twenty yards away from the west end and about a hundred yards to the east, half-way to a tiny dry wash that led to the deep arroyo, stood a mud-walled corral. In the centre of that corral was a well from which in ordinary times Stevens was wont to draw his water by means of a long well-sweep and a lame pony. Now the pony was gone and the sweep had been dismantled.

Inside the house there stood a small table that was covered with the tin bucket and a litter of greasy bacon rinds and corn-meal. A broken red earthen *olla* lay on its side in a corner half-hidden by articles of discarded clothing and a rusty ax lay in the middle of the floor. These with the canteen that Andres had thrown ahead of him in the door and some food that he had salvaged from the ambulance before the mules had stampeded were all that they had.

Mrs. Ames had sunk to the floor in the corner behind the table and Margaret stood over her protectingly. The girl's eyes were alight, her figure tense. She crossed the room to where Kelly stood.

"Well, corporal? What do you think of affairs now?"

The little Irishman grinned at her and in that grin was all the deviltry of his fighting race.

"Sure, miss, Oi don't like bein' penned up in a house like this in a foight 'Tis loike fightin' wid a hand tied behint ye. Oh, we're all right, miss."

"But corporal—" Margaret was by no means so optimistic.

"Kin thim —— git at us, miss? Ye know they can't. We've got good thick walls, plenty of ammunition, we've got breech-loadin' guns an' six-shooters an' the men to use 'em, miss. We've got wather an we've got grub."

Margaret said not another word. Underneath his optimism she sensed that something was wrong, but she could not tell what it was.

"More'n that, miss, some of the horses have gone. Did ye see that?"

"Yes. Of course. But I don't understand. What do you mean?"

"A runnin' horse heads straight fer his home, miss. I have no manner o' doubt, miss, that old Stevens has gone into Fort Critten an' that he'll tell 'em that there has been talk of an Apache raid. That'll scare 'em up some. An' thin when one of the horses comes in without a rider it'll send 'em out here in fine order. What'll happen? Sure the Captain will niver lave the five of us to shtand off that bunch. He'll be on the trail be mornin'. All we've got to do, miss, is to stand off that party till daylight—bad luck to it! Sit ye down in the corner, miss—an'—don't look."

A muffled roar outside the house was followed by a shriek from Andres. He spun back from an open loop-hole clutching at his body and went down in a heap dragging the table with him in his fall. Kelly seized him and helped him to a corner and his face as he bent over him was very grave.

"It's the first" he muttered. "Shot clean through the body. An' Holy Mary! He's upset the water-bucket!"

He had. The empty tin bucket clattered unheeded across the earthen floor as Margaret and Mrs. Ames ran forward to give what aid they could. What they could do was little enough. A bandage that Margaret hurriedly tore from a skirt that she snatched from her valise and a little warm water from the hot canteen, and they laid the stricken Andres in a corner where he strove manfully to keep from under the feet of the defenders.

The house grew hotter and hotter till it resembled an oven. Grimy sweat poured down every face as the men moved quickly from loop-hole to loop-hole scanning the ground outside for a view of the enemy.

"Look there,"

Allen pointed to the corral where a head showed from time to time but never long enough for a target.

"They've most all of 'em taken cover in the corral where they can get water from the well."

"There's a man over behind the oven, too," called Byrne. "One of you come over here and give me a hand."

Allen joined him.

"Now watch that oven carefully. The man's got a gun. I don't know how many of 'em have rifles but *he* has. He'll be shootin' at us in a minute an' he'll have to stick his head out to the right of the oven to aim. If he sticks his head to the right most likely his feet'll stick out to the left. You take his head Allen and I'll take his feet. Shoot close——"

Allen nodded grimly, rested his carbine muzzle on his hand and his hand in the loop-hole, and waited patiently.

A dirty white turban thrust cautiously from the shelter of the oven and both rifles cracked. Neatly shot through the head and both ankles the man rolled out into full view. A shrill yell from the hidden attackers behind the corral wall told that they had seen what had happened.

That corral wall gave perfect shelter. Kelly knew that the attackers had plenty of guns and ammunition and that they also carried bows and at that range an arrow was just as much to be feared as the deadliest rifle. It was the sight of those bows that worried him most though he spoke no word of his anxiety. But his face whitened as his quick eye caught a flicker of fire over in the corral. He knew very well that it could mean but one thing—fire arrows! His roof was of sun-dried sacaton grass and their whole supply of water was not more than a gallon!"

A moment later a flaming arrow shot high in air. It described its arc and plunging downward landed with a vicious *phwit* in the thatch.

Water or no water there was no help for it. They must do what they could.

He swung himself to a rafter above him, snatched his knife from his belt and cut viciously at the thatch. In two great handfuls he tore out the burning grass, drew it inward and threw it upon the floor where Allen and James stamped at it frenziedly filling the hut with whirls of dust and acrid smoke.

"There comes another—" Kelly's face was grave— "Holy Saint Pathrick help us. What is it, Allen?"

For Allen tearing a dress from Margaret's valise laid it on the floor and was filling it with loose dirt that he hastily scraped from the ground below the table.

"We've got no water to spare fer the fire," he panted. "I'll use the dirt on the fire on the roof. Cover the corral wall with your fire while I try it."

Two men ran quickly to the loop-holes that commanded the corral and stood ready to shoot at any head that should show. Two more fire arrows soared into air and plunged into the roof.

The quick rattle of the rifles sounded like Summer thunder in the enclosed space and the stench of the burning powder gripped their throats.

"Did ye put out the fire?" demanded Kelly.

"No?—but——"

Allen thrust head and shoulders up through the hole that he had made in the roof near the ridge. He knew that the flame would lick up against the wind and that left unextinguished the cabin would be filled with smoke and fumes that would drive them all into the open. He dragged the improvised sack of earth to the hole, plunged both hands into the sack and scattered the contents over the burning roof. Once—twice—three times he rose above the flaming edge of the roof with both his hands filled with the saving dirt. Then suddenly he slipped from the rafter and fell to the floor with two long arrows through his throat. At the same time Bryson staggered back from a loop-hole clutching at his breast where an arrow had been driven to the very feather. An Apache had seized the moment when they had been busied with the fire and, creeping up under the shelter of the walls, had driven his shaft through Bryson's loop-hole.

For some reason the attack gave back a little and Corporal Kelly had time to look dazedly about him. For a brief moment he could not realize what had happened; then full realization came. Half of their water supply was gone; he had lost three of his five men and—worst of all—the crackling flames were bursting into life afresh in the thatch above them. Margaret and Mrs. Ames looked wonderingly at him as he swung himself to a rafter.

"You men watch the walls," he called cheerily. "Never mind the dead. Lave thim where they are. Our business is wid the livin'. Arrah! miss, you an' Mrs. Ames keep down. 'T will be a lot cooler on the floor. Smoke draws up not down. Put some o' the wather on a rag an' kiver your nose an' mouth wid it—so! That's it."

For Margaret had suited her action to his words.

The girl was appalled. The bottom seemed to have dropped out of her universe. Two hours before she had had six defenders in a solid house. Now there were left alive but three and the house was afire. Also she had seen death for the first time.

In any other surroundings she would have collapsed, but Nature makes her drafts according to the capital available. The girl straightened under the load like an unbent bow. Her face was very white and still and there was a set to her lips and a light in her eyes that even Corporal Kelly recognized. Mrs. Ames had given way entirely and was rocking her body to and fro in a corner moaning meaninglessly and interlarding her prayers with complaints of thirst and sobs of fright.

Silence fell again and in the hot afternoon hush there was but one sound—the rustling of the thatch as Kelly jerked it from the roof and threw it on the floor where Margaret trod out the flames.

"Will they try it again, do you think?" she asked quietly.

Kelly looked at her and he suddenly knew that she could be told the truth. Indeed she knew it already although she was utterly unversed in such things.

"Well, miss, I'm not sayin' that things are as good as they was lookin' a bit ago. Half our wather 's gone but then we've only got half the people to use it. The roof's gone but save us an' bless us we won't need a roof here for two months yit. What ails you, ye Jonah?" he demanded suddenly of James who was bending to a loop-hole that faced the corral.

"A lot more o' them —— have come up out of the arroyo and have joined the rest of the crowd in the corral while we was busy with the roof."

"How many?"

"I think I counted eight that came up just now."

"Well, they'll make a bigger an' a better target an' it'll be a bigger crowd fer the captain to scatter whin he gits here in the mornin'.

"Look out!"

James whipped his carbine to his shoulder and fired. One of the newly arrived warriors who had incautiously exposed himself suddenly sat down shot through both hips.

"Five," growled James, slowly blowing through the open breech of his carbine.

The sun dropped slowly into a bed of dark-blue clouds presaging a rain that would never fall and a hot golden carpet unrolled out of the sunset. It was the night that Corporal Kelly dreaded most for he knew that some special devilment would be afoot just as soon as night should veil the eyes of the defenders.

If his heart sank at the outlook, his eyes gave no sign of it. As a matter of fact he had done the only thing that was possible under the circumstances and even now he steadfastly refused to look at the dark side of things. Those loose horses, he reflected, would have taken not more than six hours to reach Critten. Possibly they had not yet reached there. He must make every effort to hold off those blood-thirsty foes till aid should come. If he could only hold them off till daylight they would yet have a chance. A sudden thought came to him.

He had heard men say, men who were versed in these Indians forays, that the very worst place from which to fight an Indian was from cover that the Indian himself had chosen. The open was the place because one could choose his own line of action. Unconsciously he had stumbled upon a great military truth; that no fortification can take the place of mobility and that the force that immures itself defeats itself. The only question was: Did he dare do what he thought of with only himself and two other able-bodied men to protect the women?

As he stood by the loop-hole thinking over the idea that had come to him, James came up to him. Kelly's face was white where it was not black with powder smoke or striped with caking sweat and deep lines had grown from nostril to mouth, but his eyes were as cool and steady as ever.

"What's the game, Kelly? You know that we'll back your play. Tell us what you want."

Kelly's voice lowered to a whisper.

"Oi'm thinkin' man, if we've got no one outside the house afther dark they'll sneak up an' git under the cover av the walls. They'll be safe there from the rifle-fire till they could git men enough to rush the door. James, you an' me has got to lay outside the house tonight."

James nodded curtly. He too had taken this into consideration and he knew that Kelly was right, but his heart sank a little as he contemplated the possibilities. He knew by hearsay what it would mean for a white man to fall alive into the hands of the men outside for the Apache while a firm and faithful friend on occasion was also merciless and implacable as a foe and was never known to show mercy to an enemy.

"For the love o' ——, Tim, what'll we do with the women?"

Kelly grunted.

"Stand ye by the loop-hole till I come back," he whispered.

In the half-dusk James saw Kelly stoop and lift the bodies of the dead. Andres still lay in the corner where he had been laid. Presently Kelly strode over to the spot where Margaret crouched with Mrs. Ames.

"Miss——"

The girl rose and faced him, and even in the dying light the little Irishman could see that there was no weakening in her gaze. He touched her lightly on the arm and glanced deprecatingly at Mrs. Ames.

"Miss Burt, listen now, alannah. We're in a bad mess, miss. Thim Apaches has got a lot more men. They come up from the arroyo a bit ago. If we stay here we'll have them all crawlin' up undher the walls before mornin' where we can't reach 'em wid our rifles. There's but one thing to do, miss. Me an' James there must lay outside the house so we kin kape an eye on the —— if they thry to creep up on us in the night. We kin see 'em agin the skyline ye know, miss. Here —" He held out his hand and Margaret saw in his fist the heavy revolver that he had taken from one of the dead men— "Take this, miss! 'Tis loaded and ready fer action. If me an' James should not get back an' if they try to rush the house—if the worst comes to happen, miss, ye'll know what to do with it One word, miss, don't let them —— take ye prisoner alive. Am I clear?"

"You are. Perfectly clear. Thank you, Corporal Kelly." Margaret gulped. "Oh, Corporal Kelly, is there no other way?"

"None, miss. If there was, sure I wouldn't be afther doin' this. God pardon me for me foolishness. Ben Long as good as warned me, but I'd not hear to him."

"You're a brave man, Corporal Kelly. Do what you think is best."

The cold steel of the heavy Colt's revolver reassured her a little and with a little pat she tucked it in the bosom of her dress and went back to Mrs. Ames.

"Have they gone away at last? Will they let us alone now?" asked the older woman. "Where is he going?"

She pointed to Corporal Kelly who was gently lifting the bar from the lower half of the closed door.

"Lave it open," he whispered to Byrne who assisted him. "Lave it open and sit by it wid the ax. Whin I come back I'll snap me fingers like this——"

"He made a low clicking sound between finger and thumb.

"If any one comes up widout makin' that noise you belt him with the ax. Come on James boy. This is our time."

Together the two men crawled out into the night.

VIII

WHEN they crawled out upon the the hard earth before the house both men drew a breath of relief. The cool night air of the desert was like a refreshing drink to them and they reveled in it for a moment. Overhead the wonderful Arizona stars winked at them from a velvet sky. Afar a lone coyote *yap-yapped* uncertainly, then found his key and sent the full note shrilling through the night. From time to time others answered him till the dark was filled with noises.

Occasionally a night-bird moved in a mesquite clump or a desert-rat scuttered across the ground sending the hearts of his hearers into their throats. They knew that they must find cover at once for the moon would rise in a short time. A bank of clouds slowly rising in the East gave promise of a dark night, but that promise might vanish with the first wind. In the mean time there were two faces of the house that had to be safe-guarded and one man opposite two diagonal corners would be the best that they could do. Kelly drew close to James and placed his lips almost against his ear.

"Crawl over by the oven an' kape on the west side of it," he whispered. "Oi'll go over to yon little mesquite bush toward the corral. Our biggest danger lies from the corral. Most av the —— are there. Don't shoot onless ye have to and if ye *do*—git back to the house as soon as ye have fired. An' don't run straight fer the house. Mind that! I'm goin' to stay out as long as I kin. Undherstand?"

James squeezed his arm to show that he *did* understand and the two, crawling on their bellies inch by inch moved snake-like across the ground. In five minutes James had reached the dome-shaped oven and huddled in the dark of it. Looking carefully to see that revolver and knife were loose and ready to hand he lay flat on the hot earth and strained his eyes at the sky-line.

Kelly's task was more difficult. His goal was a tiny mesquite bush that stood, not over three feet high, on a small hump in line with the corral gate where a desert-rat had dug a dozen burrows. It was a good thirty yards from the house. Inch by inch Kelly drew himself along pausing from time to time to still his breathing and to move knife or revolver as they shifted under his crawling body. It took him fifteen minutes to reach that clump! Rifles would only have been encumbrances. If it were necessary to fight, knife or pistol must settle the matter. His breath came flutteringly as he settled himself behind that little bush to watch the line of the corral wall that was outlined dimly against the dark sky. Millions of miles beyond that wall a red star winked fitfully at him. He gauged the corral wall by that star. Sweat ran down his face in streams. His lips were dry and he could scarcely swallow. Every gulp in his throat seemed to click like a half-fed valve. What chance had they to escape?

He hardly dared formulate it in his own mind for he knew that their chances were not one in a thousand. With nearly a score of implacable foes only sixty yards away from them; with no food or water there was no chance of escape and it only remained for them to make the best fight that they could and to make it cost their attackers dearly. What was that?"

A quick rustle in the mesquite bush made him shrink silently back, his heart fluttering wildly. So quietly had he lain there that a tiny white-breasted desert bird had been deceived and it hopped from twig to twig within a foot of his face. The eyes of the little Irishman fell on the white breast and he shrank back again, shivering a little as the superstitions of his childhood sprang to full growth in the darkness that breeds all superstition.

"The bird wid the white breast! Holy

Mary! Holy Anne! Oi'll burn tin pounds of candles an' pay fer twenty masses if——"

Fear gripped him like a trap—the cold unreasoning fear that is bred of darkness and nerves, and Corporal Timothy Kelly who had withstood the attack of a score of Apaches without a second thought about the matter shrank timorously away from a little bird.

The bird scuttered away across the gravel and Kelly's spirits rose like the mercury in a barometer at "Set Fair." What was a little bird anyway? And he might have saved the price of ten pounds of candles if he had only thought. But now he had promised——

From time to time he thrust his head to one side or the other to get a good view of the top of the corral wall against the sky. Then he lay for long with his ear to the earth for on quiet nights the earth carries sounds like a telephone wire. Finally he heard something—the soft slurring of something moving gently across the ground. Scarcely breathing he listened carefully till he had located it. Some person or thing was moving over the ground in his immediate front and, whatever it was, was coming toward him. Strain his eyes as he would he could not see farther than five feet.

Something bulked big suddenly almost against his face and he saw what it was. The butt end of a log! Instinctively he knew it for the well-sweep that Stevens had dismantled before he had left the *rancho*. There was only one explanation for its appearance: The Indians were pushing that log toward the cabin as close as they could under cover of the darkness. It meant that when the time should come they would lift that log and drive it at the door and he knew well that the flimsy strips of rawhide that acted as hinges would never stand the strain.

The log moved slowly toward him. Then it stopped abruptly as its movement was clogged by dirt that the butt piled up before it. Then suddenly, so quickly that he almost shrieked, a dim shape loomed up above the log and Kelly realized at once what was happening. One warrior was moving that log into position where it could be used as a battering-ram. The log had stopped and the man was coming forward to clear the dirt from the butt. All was well so far. If he could not see the Apache the man could not see him. He lay close—within three feet of the log and waited, revolver in hand.

The Apache moved forward as silently as a wind-driven shadow, straddled the log and lifted and as he bent forward to lift, his bare head exposed, Corporal Kelly struck!

There was no need for a second blow. The man crumpled up like an egg-shell that some one has stepped upon and lay face down in the sand. But the sound of that blow, low as it was, sounded to Kelly like knocking down a fence. He felt that it must have alarmed every one within a radius of at least a mile and— Still, the man might not be dead. He must make sure of that. But he could not strike again.

It was no time for niceties. Another blow that would kill the man would almost certainly be heard and he did not dare risk that and so bring a dozen foes upon himself. He drew his knife and felt for the man's throat.

The little hiss that followed the knife sounded in his ears like escaping steam. He crawled back a few yards and lay still.

An hour passed. Then another. Could it be that the attackers would make no attempt on the cabin till daylight? He remembered having heard Yavapai Steve say that the Apaches rarely attacked in the dark. Certainly he hoped it was true. Could that be the day coming now?

The fingers of the false dawn stole grayly up the eastern sky. In an hour it would be light enough to see and he would have to work back toward the cabin. Wait! What was that? A slight scuffling noise came to him through the night and three figures lifted out of the haze.

Three!

Quickly he made up his mind. To fight three men with a knife was impossible. He could not retreat now without betraying his position. There was but one thing to do and he did it quickly. Slipping his heavy revolver from the open holster he held the trigger back so that in cocking the weapon there should be no click to betray him. Then, as the men moved forward he thrust the pistol muzzle almost into the very belly of the leading warrior and fired.

The shot seemed to scatter what was left of the night but long before the sparks had dropped to the ground Kelly fired twice more at the bulking shadows and was off at racing speed for the house. He stopped suddenly within a few yards of the door, held his breath and gently clicked his fingers. A low hail answered him.

"Come on in, Kelly. For the love o'—— come in."

He wormed his way through the half-open door and sprang to his feet.

"I'm thinkin' they must have got James," said Byrne brokenly. "I don't know—I heard a kind of a scuffle out there a while ago, but I couldn't leave the women to go out and see. What happened to you?"

Kelly told him breathlessly.

"I got two that I know of. Maybe more. I don't know. There's no tellin' what they'll be at now. But we can't get out to see what's happened to James. Either he's all right or—he ain't! My ——! I wish I knew.

"I wish day would come."

As if in answer to his wish it came suddenly as dawn comes in that country; a quick flushing of red and gold over the eastern ranges; a sudden swirl of heat and sunlight; a little lizard that ran barking over the hot sands and the desert day had begun.

"Look, will you, corporal."

Byrne seized the arm of the little Irishman.

"Look over at the oven."

He pointed to the dome-like oven that loomed like the spire of a Russian cathedral in the hot blue.

"Do you see James over there, Kelly?"

Kelly looked—groaned and looked again. There was no sign of James. Yet he had been there four hours before. There was but one answer and Kelly scarcely dared to admit it even to himself. James must have been taken alive.

"Maybe he got away," said Byrne hopefully.

Kelly shook his head.

"He'd never have left us in the lurch that way. Look out! Bad 'cess to thim! They're attackin' two sides of the place at once."

It was true. Under cover of the arroyo small parties of men had worked to north and south; had stretched out across the sandy mesa with the inhuman powers of concealment that were known only to the Apaches and coyotes, and were now ready to push home the attack. They had divided their guns, sending a number with each party and scattered shots *plumped* into all sides of the building at once. But the real danger that would be most difficult to evade, lay in those tiny clumps of Spanish bayonet that might be deeply rooted in the soil or—what was still more probable—that might be merely tied to the turban of some wily warrior intent on creeping up to short arrow-range.

Moving from loop-hole to loop-hole as rapidly as they could run, the two soldiers fired quickly at any moving object that they saw, leaving to Margaret the duty of watching the front wall and to give them timely warning of an attack on the door.

"If ye see any one comin' for the door, call me, miss," shouted Kelly above the roar of Byrne's rifle. "I've got to kape the —— busy where I kin see thim, but——"

"Come over here, Mrs. Ames," Margaret called angrily. "Get out of that corner and stop your whimpering. Come here! Don't you want to save your own life? Come over here I say."

But Mrs. Ames was long past any usefulness. Fright and exhaustion had taken the life from her. She rose staggeringly to her feet and lurched forward but she collapsed utterly and fell face downward in the half-burned litter of the fallen roof. Margaret bent to lift her aside when with a crash like thunder something drove against the door. The hinges burst and the wreck burst inward carrying Byrne with it in its fall, as a dozen war-geared Apaches burst into the room.

Like a flash Kelly turned and sprang at them. He had dropped his rifle and seized the rusty old ax that lay half-hidden under the fallen roof and in that moment he turned berserker as he swung at the startled mob. With one brief jerk he fairly threw Margaret behind him and struck at the leading warrior.

The man went down cut from his hawk's feather war-bonnet almost to his breech-clout and with a shout that brought down the dust in clouds from the charred rafters above him, Kelly sprang forward at the crowd.

Once—twice—thrice he struck before his foot slipped as he trod on Byrne who had gone down in a wild whirl of knives and thrusting bow-staves, and lay upon his back fighting like a dying wolf as he strove to reach his pistol for that last shot that he had been saving for himself.

But the very force of his own blows had

carried Kelly from the corner whose protecting wings guarded his back. There came a sudden flurry and a shout and an arrow sang between the heads of the attackers and Corporal Timothy Kelly, his work done, sank slowly to his knees. The ax slipped from his wet hands and, like an arrow from a bow, drove straight into the heart of the shifting crowd that surged forward and forward treading underfoot everything in that maelstrom of destruction.

Dimly conscious of utter failure Margaret Burt snatched wildly at the bosom of her dress grasping for the heavy pistol that Kelly had given her with such particular instructions for its use. She felt its cool steel but before she could use it, it was torn from her hands and she felt herself being passed from hand to hand toward the door as a short, squat warrior sprang forward to the corner where the gray-haired Mrs. Ames crouched in terror.

Mercifully Margaret fainted and so did not see or hear what took place in the corner of that ruined house. It had happened a thousand times before and it has happened a thousand times since on the Frontier and it will always happen as long as men live by the rule:

"That they shall take who have the power,
And they shall keep who can."

IX

RALPH MASON feared no pursuit. A good many hours, certainly twelve, must elapse before the effects of Scott's hospitality would wear off sufficiently to allow a party to take the trail. Even then Captain Burt would not be likely to send a small party and he could not afford to strip the post of enough men to make up a large force. Four soldiers and a Mexican driver had gone to Yuma with the ambulance and they would not be back for a couple of days. With these facts in mind he rode slowly, pondering at every step what they should do? Where should they go?

Lee had surrendered and the war was over and after four years under the Stars and Bars—four years snatched from his life before it had fairly begun—knowing practically nothing except war and how to manage a plantation he felt indeed with the Moor that, "Othello's occupation's gone."

Mile after mile he rode with his chin on his breast remembering that for four years now the tatterdemalion crew riding behind him had owned no other leadership than his. What he said to do that they did; where he said to go there they went without question. It was a heavy burden now. What should he do? Where should they go?

That was the first question to be decided. By refusing to take the oath of allegiance that Captain Burt had been instructed to offer them, he suddenly realized that they had become literally men without a country; aliens in every sense of the word, yet worse than aliens, for aliens had at least the option of returning to the place of their birth.

The land of his birth! He laughed grimly as he thought of it. As his memory bridged the years to the long stretches of pleasant pasture-land under the great oaks where the cattle stood knee-deep in fragrant clover; of the woods-lots thick with standing timber; of the broad fields of corn and wheat and tobacco; of the long lines of the white washed quarters of the slaves now gone to be seen never again——

He gave a sudden exclamation as a thought came to him. The sale of the home plantation had been completed and the money paid over to the lawyers months ago and they had written him that they had invested it in Baltimore and Ohio railroad bonds which they were sending to him by registered mail. Registered mail! That was one good institution for which at least he blessed the Government at Washington for it ensured now that those bonds would be delivered to him when he should claim them. The sudden recollection of that package of bonds that was on its way to him and of all that it meant to him reminded him that since he could not himself return to Fort Critten to get it he would have to send a messenger. When it should come— When would it come? It might be a day or so. It might be a month. A horse thrust up alongside nearly forcing him from the trail and Yavapai thrust his beard almost in Ralph's face.

"Which way now, cap'n?" he asked cheerily. "The boys behind are all wonderin' where we're all a goin' to."

"I— Why, confound it all, Steve, I don't know and that's a fact. I was just ridin' I guess and thinkin' about somethin' else.

My mind was in a muddle. What do you suggest, Yavapai?"

"Who, me? Derned if I know. We might ride on till daylight. Then we kin get somethin' to eat and hold a war council. What say? Make it a peace council since the war's over."

"The war's never over out here," said Ralph soberly. "It never will be over as long as there's a wagon-train to be jumped or an Apache to jump it."

"That's so, too."

Yavapai fell into silence and the quiet of the night was broken only by the steady *clump-clump* of the heavy-footed horses and their labored breathing, for the night was hot.

"Say, cap'n, I was just wonderin'. You couldn't quite see it so you could take that oath of allegiance, hey? That would have restored all your rights—hey? Maybe you will when this murder's cleared up."

Ralph threw up his head with a jerk.

"Listen, Yavapai. And then don't talk to me again about this. It hurts. That's why. You have lived out here for a whole lifetime and you 've lost touch a bit I suppose, but just suppose you were in my place. Suppose you had fought for certain principles—certain things that you knew were right. Suppose you were beaten—licked—simply beaten almost to death by a man who was bigger and stronger in every way than you. Suppose you had an eye gouged out and a leg busted and every thing that you owned in the world was taken from you by the man who licked you. What would you do, Yavapai?"

"Me? By golly, I'd holler 'Nuff' so loud you could hear me clear to Texas. I'd holler it quick before he choked my wind off, too."

"That's all right! We've done that too. But then suppose that that man held out a written promise for you to sign and told you that if you'd sign it he'd let you up. Then you read it and found that it was a promise bindin' you to live his way; by his laws; to follow his customs. Oh ——, man! What's the use? You must see it, Yavapai. It's plain slavery. It's what he said he was tryin' to stop."

Instantly the old man's face changed. Even in the dusk that prevented him from seeing clearly Ralph sensed a change. Yavapai seemed to grow in the saddle and his eyes fairly gleamed in the half-dusk.

"Son—" His words came gruffly— "I come out with David Jackson in '27. I was a youngster then without even a beard to me chin; I've spent most of my life fightin' somethin'. Sometimes it was just hunger an' thirst; sometimes it was plain laziness; mostly it was greasers and Injuns. I began before I was twenty and I'm a goin' to tell you one big true thing that if you ain't learned yit it's time you was learnin'—a thing that I've found is as true as—as my rifle is. It's this: Fightin' ain't wrong. Gettin' beat up ain't wrong. That is jest a mistake in judgment. It's all right to fight —to fight like the ——. To fight any body at any time fer almost anything at any place. That don't hurt much. But the thing that does hurt and hurt so bad that there ain't no cure fer it is: To *hate* the man you're fightin'. Me? I've fit greasers and Cocopas an' Maricopas. No. I take that back. The Maricopas ain't much on fighting'— An' Apaches, with one er two mix-ups with Kit Carson among the Navajos an' the Pah Utes. I've been afeard of 'em all my life—" He grinned reminiscently—"but I don't remember that I ever yit got the better of an Injun till I quit *hatin'* him. I tell you, son, the man who goes into a fight with his eyes clogged up with hate is like a man with a bandage over his face. He can't see good. *Sabe* what I say?"

Ralph considered for a while in silence. Presently he spoke but this time in a different tone.

"I believe I do understand what you mean, Yavapai. There's a lot of good sense in what you say. But, Yavapai, I couldn't take that oath of allegiance. If I took it I would mean to keep it, but I don't. I can't. Man! I've got nothin'—nothing' in the world, but my horse and my rifle."

Yavapai swore a sudden sharp oath. Ralph looked at him questioningly.

"I came mighty near forgettin' it. That feller Scott—him that gave the party—" He chuckled amusedly at the recollection—"He told me that when his party come down through Bear Creek Cañon they picked up a lot of letters and papers where the Apaches had looted the wagon-train and cut open the mail-sacks. It seems the fools was given a lot o' mail at Los Angeles to bring along with 'em. It seems that there was a package fer you. A li'l bit of a package wrapped up in brown paper. He said it had been sent by registered mail, but all the care of it stopped at Los Angeles. Said he found it under a bush an' brung it in—What ails you?"

"Matter? Why confound it, Yavapai, that's probably the very package that I've been lookin' an' hopin' an' prayin' for for the past month."

He told Yavapai all about the matter.

"Huh!"

The old man shook his head.

"That package is back in Salsipuedes right now. Barton's the postmaster."

"Yes, and I can't go back there. If I go back I'll be arrested on that murder charge. You know that."

"And convicted, too," Yavapai jerked out. "Don't make no mistake about that an' if you send a man with an order fer the package they'll trail him back to you. You can't afford to fight the United States Government."

"I did it for a long time," quoth Ralph grimly. "I can't afford to take that loss. All the money that is in that package."

"You can't afford not to lose," quoth Yavapai grimly. "There comes the dawn now. Let's stop a while. A handful of mesquite beans and a mouthful o' water'll freshen up the ponies. Here's a good place and there comes the sun."

FOR more than eight hours they had traveled at a steady pace with only an occasional halt for wind before plunging on again, and they had covered nearly forty miles. He knew the country in a general way. He knew that short steep mountain-ranges ran from northwest to southeast and that in this section of the country the rivers ran to the southeast. More than this it was unnecessary to know.

Above them the craggy masses of the Hand o' God Range slowly took on new tints and hues in the rising sun. Rocks and peaks newly tipped with molten gold shone redly above the light mist that rose from the valleys. Blue and red, umber and dun, black and brown, those vast ranges changed color like a chameleon. Cutting those long ridges like a slice cut from a cake, great cañons, like that which they were now in, ran for miles into the hills, impenetrable except for Apaches and for men who were willing to take their lives in their hands. Those gorges were filled with huge live-oak-trees and sycamores, beech and piñon-pines; they were filled along the water-courses with the light green of the aspens and the lower slopes were covered with great thickets of the red-stemmed madrono bushes and the prickly masses of the mountain laurel.

Ralph looked about him. This was a good place. From far off he could hear the cluck and gurgle of a little stream running over boulders. If old Yavapai had been himself a criminal seeking shelter he could have found no better place.

In ten minutes they had unsaddled their horses and turned the "side-lined" animals loose to graze on the curly mesquite grass that grew under every bush. In ten minutes more Carter had a fire started and a coffee-pot was bubbling noisily. When they had eaten and, full-fed, had turned to tobacco, Ralph motioned to them.

"Come on over here, men. I want to hold a council with you."

They gathered about him under a great live-oak, squatting on their heels in Indian fashion as they waited for him to speak.

In a few words he recounted what had happened. He went over all that they already knew and told them what he had learned from Yavapai.

"I'm bound to tell you that you're derned fools if you stay with me. I'm down and out and the law will be after me, and if you all stick with me you'll be tarred with the same stick. It won't be long before they'll be offerin' a reward for me. Dead or alive—like a wolf or a coyote," he added bitterly. "As a matter of common sense I advise you to have no more to do with me. That's plain common sense."

After a brief silence that lasted till it hurt Duryea looked up from twirling his cup in his hands. Back at home Duryea had been a promising lawyer till he had been caught in the whirlpool of war.

"I don't remember my Dumas very well," he said quaintly; "but as well as I recollect it the motto of *D'Artagnan* and the '*Three Musketeers*' was a pretty good one. 'Member it: 'One for all and all for one.' We've kind of got the habit of stickin' together, captain, and we think we'll keep it up. Five years have given it to us you see. Habits are a good deal like guns; when you get a good one you want to stick to it. We'll stick, captain."

The others nodded wordlessly and Ralph gulped a little as he looked at them. Then:

"All right, men. I'm much obliged to you. Let's get on then and consider the ways and means. How can we live? We can't become like the tramps that we used to see back home. We can't live like the Indians. Who can suggest anything?"

Carter looked up quickly.

"El Salero," he said jerkily. "When I was talkin' to old Burt for the paroles I remember that I said that we might take a shot at findin' the Lost Cabin Mine. It never occurred to me that we really would want to do it. If we were to go huntin' up the Lost Cabin now he might remember what I said and send men up after us, and we don't want to get into a fight if we can help it. I move that we try to find El Salero. You all remember it of course.

Of course they did. All of them knew of it. They could not have lived where they had lived for so long without having heard of the wealth and riches of that mythical mine. As Carter told about it the wonders of it lost nothing in the telling. Finally he pointed off to the bright northeast in the general direction of the Tonto Basin.

"It's somewheres off there," he said briefly. "Are you game?"

"Yes. Of course. But we've got no outfit."

This was from Lee the cautious.

Carter snapped his fingers impatiently.

"Now that we know what we want to do it's easy enough to do it. How much money have we got among us?"

From tattered pockets, from sun-cracked saddle-bags and from the linings of their ragged old hats they produced what they had. It was spoils of the Egyptians that remained from the last pay-day in the post when they had played draw-poker with the soldiers of the garrison.

"Count it, Yavapai."

After much audible sucking of a none-too clean thumb as he counted the notes and change, Yavapai announced curtly—

"Two hundred and ten dollars an' three cents."

Again they looked at Carter, who evidently had plans of his own.

"We'll hit down for Yuma City and buy an outfit there. We'll need picks and shovels and powder and drills. We can stop at Est's ranch and let two men go on into Yuma to get what we want. Then we'll pull up stakes and get away. It might be well to try to send a man in to Fort Critten to see if he can't get that package for the captain."

They debated the plan from every angle and it seemed good. It would be suicidal for Ralph to go back to Critten while Captain Burt was in command there. But in few months a new garrison would be in Critten and a new officer would be in command who would be free from Burt's prejudices. With him the evidence that Yavapai could give would have some weight. If Ralph were to go at all to Critten he must wait at least till Burt should be gone. That would be only sensible.

"All right then. That's what we'll do. We'll leave tonight for Est's ranch. We'll travel by night so it'll be cool. Yavapai, it seems to me that I heard a turkey up among those juniper-trees hollerin' '*Pot! Pot!*' in a most annoyin' way. See if you can't call his bet."

When the sun was well-down behind the ridges they saddled up and pushed on their way, this time to the southwestward. They meant to cut the Yuma trail and then to turn westward on it till they should reach one of the ranches along the trail. It really did not matter which one it was.

Hour after hour they traveled. Once out of the hills and working along the flat plain they made better time and jogged along pleasantly through the cool night. From time to time they halted to listen to the voices of the night; a coyote wailing his soul out among the hills or the deeper note of the gray wolf that sent the blood chilling to the heart with its wild intensity. Yavapai laughed as it came to them.

"Many a time I've heard it when I couldn't tell was it wolf er Injun tryin' to coax me a leetle further into the hills. Yonder's the Yuma trail——"

It lay like a hot yellow band burned across the brown plain. They turned westward and pushed the tired ponies into a trot. Yavapai scanned the country with a calculating eye.

"Darned recruit that I am!" he muttered. "We turned too far to the southeast. We're away to the east of even Stevens' *rancho*. Well, it don't really make any difference. We've got all the time we want. We kin make Long's ranch tonight— In the name o' ——, what's that?"

Clattering up out of a dry wash ahead of them; coming as Duryea said, "Like a house afire," a crazy sorrel horse blundered toward them in a maddened run. His outstretched head was low, his nostrils were filled with blood and his bulging eyes were big with terror.

Yavapai "bull-dogged" him, throwing him flat with a grunt in the trail, and the men gathered about him.

"That's Baldy, the sorrel horse that's used by the mail orderly at Critten. One of the recruits rode him to Yuma with the escort. Look there!"

It was an Indian arrow-head sticking in the cantle of the saddle with about two inches of broken shaft still hanging in the lashings.

"What do you make of it?" Some one asked the question but all knew the answer by rote. Ralph voiced it clearly.

"Get back to the trail, men," he said curtly. "That ambulance with the escort has been jumped somewhere along the trail. We must find out what we can, but first we must send word to Fort Critten."

He wrote a brief note on a page of his note-book and tied it to the saddle. It read:

> **The ambulance party has been jumped somewhere on the Yuma trail. Don't know where or what has happened. Better send aid at once."**

He did not sign it for he suspected that the sight of his name would make Burt fear a trap. He struck the horse a hearty slap with the slack of his reins.

"Hut! Get on you blunderin' fool! He'll run till he drops," he said slowly. "That fool horse'll take the word to Critten long before we could get it there. In the meantime, rifles, men! We'll hit as fast as we can for Stevens' ranch."

X

RALPH knew that the stampeded horse would take the news of the raid to Critten faster than any man whom he might have sent. A stampeded horse heads for his own home as unerringly as a homing pigeon heads for its loft. It was a little more than twenty miles to Fort Critten. In three or four hours the horse would reach the place. In four or five hours Burt would be on the trail with a party. That would put Burt about ten hours behind the outrage. There was but one thing to do with those seven men riding behind him—to push ahead and see exactly what had taken place and where. If there had been a fight, to strike the trail and hang on to it till Burt could come up. It was very certain that something would have to be done to put a permanent stop to these Apache forays along the lowlands.

At this point he pushed his pony into a trot and with a swing of his arm sent his men ahead.

Though they went rapidly they traveled with all caution. The flat plain was dotted with scattered mesquite bushes that grew on little mounds in which rats and gophers had dug their holes and the wide expanse of the flat was cut in many places with dry washes that would be roaring torrents in the rainy season where just now the tortuous trail wound in and out.

Six of his men with Yavapai were scattered well to the front, to right and left of him, and Lee with the pack-mules rode directly in the rear of him. They passed two dry washes without seeing a sign of anything when suddenly Yavapai threw up a warning hand. Ralph rode up to him at a gallop.

"What is it, Steve?"

"Over yonder."

His finger pointed to the west where a faint trickle of white smoke oozed slowly up against the hot blue sky.

"Nobody out here ever has a fire at this time o' day," said Steve. "Close in, cap'n, but do it keerful."

"I will. I'll let the flankers swing around first."

He motioned to right and left to the flanking men of that half-moon-shaped line. Like automatons they went forward, rifles on their saddle pommels, pistols lying loose in the holders. Not a sound broke the silence of the desert but the *thud-thud* of the galloping hoofs and a faint clatter and jangle from the laboring pack-mules.

They dropped down into the arroyo that crossed the trail, and as the hurrying men topped the steep western bank Ralph saw Duryea and Carter, riding on the flanks, shove their rifles back in their scabbards and pull their horses down to a walk. That meant only one thing—that there was no immediate danger. He pushed his own horse up the slope, topped the edge of the mesa and looked out across the flat at the Stevens house. There was no sign of life there except in the faint edging of smoke that rose from the house itself.

"There's no one there. Come on."

And rapidly converging upon the house they rode forward at a trot to face such a scene of desolation as could only be seen upon the frontier after an Apache raid.

After a casual glance at the general line of the corral to assure himself that it concealed no foes, Ralph swung out of saddle at the house, left his horse with the reins trailing and entered the place. He came out white-faced and sweating but his eyes were cool. To be shocked was one thing; to lose his self-control in the storm of furious anger that shook him was another. Yavapai was right. Anger was like a bandage over the eyes blinding all judgment. His men huddled in a group behind him except for Carter who remained far out upon the flat to act as a vidette, and they took in all that had happened. Yavapai, moving from point to point, summed up the evidence unerringly.

"They was druv inside the house an' the hostiles fired the roof. Then they rushed the place an' busted in the door with that log. Look here——"

He lifted the pile of rubbish from the corner of the room and carefully raised the dead body of Mrs. Ames.

"Here's another."

The body of Andres was pulled from under an unburned corner of the fallen roof.

"My Lord, captain!"

Yavapai wiped the sweat from his eyes.

"I've lived on the Border fer thirty years an' this is the worst that I've ever seen. What's Carter yellin' for?"

They turned to look. It might mean anything. Carter was waving them toward the mud-walled corral on top of which they now saw two buzzards roosting. They had not been there before. Those birds meant only one thing—bodies in the corral. Instantly Duryea and Yavapai broke into a run.

Ralph, watching them, saw them enter the gate at a run, rifles at the ready. Then he saw the guns drop as the two men leaped at some thing inside the corral. Almost instantly Yavapai re-appeared and motioned frantically to him. He joined them at a run.

"There's only dead men over there—" Yavapai jerked his hand at the house—"They can't help us none. There's a man over here—alive."

In two leaps Ralph joined Duryea who was bending over a prone figure stretched out upon the ground. It was James, the man who with Kelly had crept from the house and had taken shelter behind the oven.

He lay upon his back, hands and feet tied to stakes that had been driven deep in the hard-baked soil. Duryea was sobbingly cutting at the rawhide thongs that bound hands and feet, and paid no attention to the furious low-voiced oath from Ralph that told that he had seen the man's eye-lids had been cut away leaving the lidless eyes exposed to the baking heat of the midday sun. The red mark of a horse-hair lariat about his neck showed the manner of his capture, and two deep knife-thrusts in his breast gave mute evidence of his defense. He had not been taken prisoner without a struggle. The man was dying, but they must try to get some information from him before he died.

While Ralph and Duryea cut James loose from the stakes, Yavapai hastened to the house for the old bucket that he had seen. He drew a pailful of water from the well in the corral and hurried back with it. It was warm and it smelled of alkali and sulfur, but it was the best that they could get. The wounded man tossed restlessly from side to side, each move that he made pumping the blood from the knife-wounds and from his lips. It was very clear that he could not last more than a few minutes. Presently he gasped brokenly and his right hand lifted a little.

"Can you hear me?" Ralph asked in a low voice, "Who is he? I don't know him. Does any one know who he is?"

"Name's James," quoth Carter gruffly. "He is one of the recruits who was sent off with the escort to Yuma to get Miss Burt."

"Look for some sign of the girl—" Ralph turned on Carter. "The ambulance should be somewhere around here. The Apaches couldn't carry that away with 'em. I'll stay with James."

"The girl ain't in the house." Lee spoke positively. "I've looked all through the place. What've you got there, Ives?"

"Wheel-marks."

Ives who had been examining the ground outside the corral pointed to the indisputable sign of wagon-wheels. "Yonder they run—straight for the arroyo."

He and Epps took the trail and followed it at a run to the edge of the cutting where the arroyo was closest to the house. Presently they came back.

"Well?"

Ralph looked up quickly.

"The ambulance an' three mules is piled up in the bottom of the gully, captain. It looks like the people got to the house all right and then turned the team loose. I can't tell where the fourth mule is. Likely he got loose an' ran away."

"No!" Yavapai jerked out the words. "If he'd got loose he'd have run home like the horse. Only mules is got more sense'n horses. He'd have beat him home. The Apaches have captured that mule an' took him along with 'em. They'd rather have mule meat to eat than the fattest antelope you ever seen."

This was a fact that they had overlooked. Never horse Indians, the main use that the Apaches had for ponies or for captured mules was to eat them.

"It looks like the Apaches have made a clean sweep of the whole bunch. Every man an' that old gray-headed woman, but—Where's the girl? That's the question."

The only answer to that question lay with the dying James, for it was very clear to them all now that he could not last long. From time to time he strove to speak but no words would come. Ralph thrust an arm under his head and raised it.

"James." His voice was almost pleading in its intensity. "Try hard to answer me. "Where's Miss Burt?"

"Gone—" It was half-word, half-gurgle. It might have been either.

"Gone where? Was she killed? Answer me that?"

But the dying James was too far gone even to shake his head.

"Try once more, James. Try hard, man! Buck up, man! Answer me if it's in you. If Miss Burt was carried off, raise your hand."

Did that right hand flutter a little in a vain attempt to raise? He could not be sure. He must try again.

"For the love of Heaven, James, come to life again for just a second! Was the girl carried off? Did they take her away with them? If they did, move your hand."

The full roar of a revolver shot crashed out. Ralph jumped a foot as Yavapai grimly blew into the cylinder of his revolver. The right hand of the dying James was fluttering like a leaf in the wind.

"What the deuce do you mean shootin' right in my ear?" demanded Ralph hotly.

"It was the only way to wake him up before he dies," said Yavapai grimly. "I've seen it happen before. Nothin' else would have brung him to. He'd gone before he answered you. The girl was carried off. If they had killed her they'd have left the body here.

Ralph rose to his feet, his eyes clouded.

"They'll kill her," he said shortly. "We'll find her dead body somewhere near."

"You're wrong there, captain," cut in Yavapai. "If there's one thing that I know it's Apaches. They've took that mule and they've got the girl. They've killed all the rest of the party and they've carried off the guns. They've headed back for their own hills just as sure as shootin'. You can bet on that and on the fact that they have taken the girl along with 'em. As long as she can keep up with 'em they probably won't hurt her, but if she breaks down or makes them stop for her they'll kill her."

The look in Ralph's eyes stopped him, for to the youngster had suddenly come recollection of the tales that he had heard of the terrible fate of women who had fallen alive into the hands of the Horse Indians of the Plains. Yavapai suddenly realized what Ralph was thinking.

"No, no," he said quickly. "You're wrong again, captain. Bad as they air they ain't quite as bad as that. They show no mercy to an enemy; they may torture a prisoner. Not always, though. They'll take the girl back to their *rancheria*. That is they will if she can stand the trip. She's their best bower right now."

"What do you mean, 'their best bower'?"

"I mean their right bower in a euchre game. Of course them Indians know that they'll be chased. They'll try to hold the girl as a prisoner to buy themselves off with if the worst comes to worst. One thing is in our favor——"

"In the name of Heaven what is it?"

"We're hittin' their trail at least ten hours before they think we can. They'll only think of soldiers from the fort. And we ain't no blind men on a trail neither. What's the matter, captain?"

For Ralph, thrusting two fingers into his mouth, emitted a shrill whistle that brought his men to him at a run.

"We'll take the trail of course," he said shortly. "The girl has been carried off by the band that jumped the outfit. I figure there were about twenty-five men. Is that right, Yavapai?"

Yavapai nodded.

"That's about as close as I kin figger it. Say, cap'n! Has it struck you yit that you want to keep out o' the grip of that man, Burt. He'll hit this trail and he'll bring up his men from Critten. If you all run up against him he'll arrest you again."

"I can't help that," said Ralph quickly. "You know darned well, Yavapai, that no white man would hold back now.

Yavapai looked long at him and turned away shortly.

"Water the ponies, Carter. Epps, pile up the rest of the grass roof so it'll burn. That party from Critten'll be 'long in a few hours and they won't see a house if it ain't afire."

"I'll write another letter that'll wake 'em up," said Ralph.

He found a piece of the brown paper that had been wrapped about the luncheon that Margaret had carried, took a pencil stub from his pocket and wrote:

> "About twenty-five Apaches jumped outfit here. Everybody killed, but Miss Burt. She has been carried off to the north. Follow as quickly as you can. We are on trail. I will mark the trail for you. Hurry. MASON.

He pinned this letter to the gate of the corral, using a wooden peg.

"We'd better let the horses rest for an hour. They're tuckered out," said Yavapai. "More haste less speed. Slip the bits outen their mouths and rake up some mesquite beans for 'em."

"And cook some meat off those mules," said Ralph. "We'll need grub on this trail and once we start we'll hardly dare to light a fire. I wish to Heaven it was dark." He almost groaned.

"So do I—" Yavapai laid a hand on his arm. "There's their trail." He pointed to some mule-tracks leading off to the northeast.

"They have gone back to the hills by just about the line that we took comin' down, but they're about five miles further west than we were."

"What's your idea, Yavapai?"

"Oh, they'll head back into the hills just as fast as they can. They always do. They must have a big *rancheria* in there somewhere."

Ralph knew that this was probably true. He was sure also that that raiding band would travel as fast as it could across the intervening miles of flat plain, knowing that while in the open they could be seen for miles. When they should strike the foothills they would leave one or two men to watch the trail by which they had come to give warning of any pursuit and the main body would travel in a more leisurely manner on their way. If they were hurried or if capture or fight should threaten them they would scatter, probably kill their prisoner and reassemble at some far-distant place. For his party to be seen following the trail across that open plain would sign Margaret Burt's death warrant. They all realized that.

But they must do something. They could not sit supinely by and wait the arrival of the men from Critten. They might never come. That running horse might have broken a leg and so never have reached the post. His letter might be lost from the saddle. Any one of a score of things might have happened. In the meantime they must do what they could. In the ordinary course of things it would be foolish for nine men to trail twenty-five with any hopes of successful attack, but this was an extraordinary occurrence. First of all he must rest his horses and get some cooked food.

In two hours Carter and Duryea had cooked enough meat to load a pack-mule. They cut it in long strips so that it could be rolled up in a compact pack.

"All right now." Ralph looked them over. "We'll move out now. We'll travel slowly; get the general line of the trail and when dark comes we'll hit out in good earnest. One thing's certain: Daylight mustn't find us on this plain. We'll have to be well-hidden in the trees in one of those cañons when the sun comes up. I figure we've got a good chance to get that girl back. We'll just hang on to the trail and keep leaving signs that the men from Critten can follow. That'll bring 'em up to us when we need them. We've got a good chance to get the girl back."

"Or else we'll bust a cinch tryin'," muttered Duryea. "Come on, men, let's get started now."

They took the trail.

XI

A PRIVATE LEEDS watering four mules in the bitter alkaline waters of the creek below Fort Critten leaped suddenly into life as the rush and clatter of a wildly running horse came to his ears. He tightened his grip on the single halter-shank that held all four mules and looked across the stream. Down the slope beyond the creek a sorrel horse was running like a lambent flame across the ground. He stopped for nothing in his course. Leaping rocks and arroyos he took the broad creek in a single jump and was off up the slope to the stables before Leeds could do more than whirl his startled horse. He left the mules to find their own way back to the corral for he had seen and recognized that sorrel horse. He burst into the post like a crazy man.

"James's horse is in an' James ain't with him! Look at him! Somethin's happened to the escort with the wagon that went to Yuma City. Look, I say!"

The clattering and wondering guard fell in at the command. There was no telling what would happen next. A moment later the old stable sergeant headed across the parade ground at a run. He was bareheaded and red-faced, and he was clad only in a dirty white cotton undershirt and a pair of blue dungaree stable trousers but he stood upon no ceremony as he thrust his way into the office where Captain Burt, the commanding officer, sat.

Sitting listlessly at his desk with a pile of papers before him Captain Burt looked up dully. A half-emptied bottle that lay in the near drawer of his desk could have explained his dullness. Sergeant Benson slapped a dirty slip of paper before his commanding officer.

"Sir! Private James's horse is in without a rider. I found this note tied to the saddle."

The astounded Burt seized the paper and read and his face went white.

"The horse just came in. The paper was tied to the saddle. It's plain enough, sir. The escort has been jumped by some o' them hostiles an' the horse ran away an' came back."

Burt sprang to his feet. He tottered a little, but the kindly Benson, the one old soldier now left in the post except Ames, gripped his arm. Burt spoke, striving for self-command.

"Don't you see, sergeant? They had time to write that note. Then they saw the attack comin' and took cover somewhere. They couldn't have been off the main trail. They must be at one of the ranches. Where are they?"

"Somewhere within twelve hours, sir. That horse never ran like that for more'n twenty miles. He'd have been dead."

"The note says, '*From* Yuma.' Then the escort had got to Yuma and was coming back. Then my daughter was with them. My God!"

And poor old Burt sank back in his chair with a sick soul.

"I'll turn the command out at once, sir. How many men, sir? They'll all want to go."

"I know it. They're good men. We've only got forty men. Turn out twenty men, sergeant, on the best horses we've got. Have them take all the ammunition they can carry and five days' rations in the saddle-bags. Send a message at once down to Barton and Perkins in Salsipuedes and tell them that we want every man they can rake up who will go with us. We will need scouts and trailers. Quick now!"

Before the last word was out of his mouth Sergeant Benson had left the house at a run. When he was yet only half-way to the barracks the men, hearing his frenzied hail, poured out of the doors like bees. Benson stopped the first man.

"Here, Johnson! Run down to Salsipuedes an' tell Barton and Perkins and whoever else you see to git their guns an' ponies an' come up here at once. There's the —— to pay. The escort from Yuma with two women has been jumped by the hostiles. Hurry now."

There was no need to tell Johnson more. He was off at a run and long before the men had saddled up, Barton and Perkins with two other men rode and joined Captain Burt.

"I've got five more men down at the store," said Barton quickly. "I told them to lock the store and to come up here tonight. There's no tellin' where this business may spread to."

Burt agreed with him.

"I needed a scout or two, Barton" he said. "So I sent for you. Will either you or Perkins go along with us? I doubt if any of our men can either find a trail or follow one if left to their own devices. I wish to goodness Yavapai Steve was here."

More than once that day he was to feel the same longing and, though he would not confess it even to himself, he would have given much to have at his back Ralph Mason and his hard-bitten gang of Galvanized Soldiers. But there was no use wishing for them now. They had been discharged and had gone after having snatched their captain from the hand of the law.

"Of course we'll go with you," said Barton heartily. "We'll both go. ——, captain! This is no time for a man to hang back. This is no one-man fight. It's everybody's business to stamp out this kind of thing and make the Border safe. Tell me what you know about it."

Burt told him, brokenly, for the full horror of it was now upon him. Barton, rough as he was, strove from time to time to steady the older man, for crooked and dishonest though he undoubtedly was in a business deal, some of the cardinal virtues yet stuck to Barton as iron sticks to slag in a melting-pot.

"We'll find out all about it in a few hours, captain. I see the men are ready, sir. Let's hit the trail."

So, under the longing eyes of the guard every man of whom wanted to accompany that little column, the twenty selected men with Burt, Barton and Perkins at their head rode out of Fort Critten and headed west.

WHEN they had forded the creek and climbed to the broad mesa, Burt gave the signal to trot and before they had gone a half-mile every horse was stretching out in a head-long gallop. Burt was so anxious to reach the scene of the attack that he was paying no attention to the dictates of common-sense. Barton checked him.

"Pull down, captain! For the love o' Heaven pull down. A stone image can't stand this pace. The horses will be broken down in five miles. Their bellies are filled with grass an' water."

It was good advice and Burt unwillingly pulled down. Himself, only an office soldier, he knew nothing about marching troops in the field. Left without an adviser he would have set his command afoot in ten hours through sheer crass ignorance.

"Where do you-all reckon it took place?" Perkins pushed up alongside. "That horse couldn't have come more'n a few miles. How long had the escort been gone?"

Burt told him. Perkins considered a little while.

"Then they ought to have made Stevens' ranch last night. Very likely that's just where it took place," he said suddenly.

"May be so. How far is it from here?"

"Near thirty miles I reckon. We can do it at this gait with a little gallopin' mixed in with it, but that means that we'll have to rest the horses when we git there. Trot again. Here's good ground."

Again they trotted throwing the miles behind them as a plow shoulders a furrow aside. Arroyo and mesa; hill and valley; and mesquite-dotted scrub, where the great kangaroo-like jack-rabbits darted from under their horses' feet, dropped away behind them. A herd of antelope dashed across their trail and passed unheeded. Perkins pointed to two tiny gray dots hard on the heels of the hurrying herd.

"Gray wolves huntin' their supper. They'll have the slowest doe in the herd by night. Come on, captain. Stevens *rancho* is over the next ridge. What ails you?"

Perkins turned suddenly on his partner who was riding with his head thrust over his horse's near shoulder. He was studying the trail.

"Horses have been along here today," he said briefly. "That sorrel horse came along here. Runnin' like a ——. Look, will you——

"He pointed to the hoof-prints of a running horse. Then he pointed to other prints; the trail of a horse going in the opposite direction that overlaid the first.

"That runnin' horse was stopped here! See? Here's a man's footprint in the dust. Here's where your man wrote the note, captain. Somebody's ahead of us on the trail. Move on, captain."

"We're only losing time here. Come on men."

What with the heat and the excitement and the almost crazing worry, Burt's voice had sunk to a mere croak. They swept on again; this time with two scouts thrown hastily forward as they swept rapidly across the flat; down and across the arroyo and up to the edge of the mesa on which stood the house.

The embers had ceased to burn and were sending up little jets of white smoke as the hot wind of the desert caught them. The column rode up and halted near the house. From some distance away they had seen the bodies that Ralph had been unable to bury and horror held them silent till the full awfulness of that burning house and what it held and only half-concealed burst upon their startled eyes.

For a brief moment the command went crazy. The men, leaving their horses, did what Ralph had not taken time to do; they gathered up the dead and were about to attempt to dig a grave in that cement-like soil when Porson who had gone over to the corral came running back.

"James's body's over in the corral, sir, an' here's a note that was pegged to the corral gate."

Burt snatched the note from him and read.

"Now by ——." Burt voiced a certain very great Name. It was not an oath. It was a prayer. "That man Mason's ahead of us on the trail. Read it, Barton."

Barton read it and looked very like a sheep-dog that has been caught killing the sheep he has been kept to guard. For the time at least Jerry Barton felt a little ashamed of himself.

"That's good," he said gruffly. "If Mason's ahead of us with the Galvanized Soldiers we kin trail fast. He'll leave a good trail fer us. He says so. Old Yavapai is likely with Mason, too. Our ponies are none too good though. Better water 'em and pull out at once, I suppose.

"Of course. The horses have got another thirty miles left in 'em yet. No matter if we kill every horse in the outfit if we catch up with Mason—What's the matter now?"

For Barton was doing exactly what Yavapai Steve had done earlier in the day; he was walking along the trail getting an idea of the general direction.

"It runs straight for that hill over there."

He pointed to a crimson peak that the setting sun was gilding.

"We can't take a chance on missin' the trail in the dark. We don't dare to show a light on the trail either. Ready? All right. Let's move out then. I've got the line."

THIS time they traveled at as rapid a gait as they could maintain. All talk had ceased along the column and set faces and compressed lips told what a vengeance would be exacted if the opportunity should come. Hour after hour they rode. The sun dropped behind the rim of the hills and the quick dark shut down, but they seldom broke the gait. From time to time Barton would swing out of saddle and verify the trail by the dim light of a match held in the crown of his hat. As the first rays of the morning sun caught the distant peaks of the far-off range they halted their weary mounts in the entrance to a broad cañon that opened from the foothills on to the plain. Down that gorge a little stream trickled to be lost in a few yards in the hot sands of the plain.

"We'll have to make camp here," said Burt hoarsely. "The horses haven't got another mile in 'em. We've just got to stop a while."

"It's a ground-hog case," said Perkins curtly.

His horse had lain quietly down and was not even making any attempt to roll; a sure sign of utter and complete exhaustion.

"I wonder where that man Mason is?"

There was nothing to tell him where Mason was; nothing but a few footprints that told them mutely that he had gone ahead but every man in that command knew that they must and would follow that winding trail no matter where it might lead them.

As a matter of fact Ralph had done exactly what he had said to Yavapai that he would do. Marching slowly toward the blue haze of the foothills, keeping always when it was possible behind the masses of the mesquite scrub, seeking always the scanty cover afforded by the shallow dry washes, his little party pushed toward the distant hills. They rarely made more than three miles an hour. Sometimes they did not make more than two for tired horses lead slowly and they marched on foot to spare their mounts. But when the short twilight was over and darkness shut down like a lid over the desert they deployed again into column and mounted. They were close enough to the main range to see where the trail that they were following would take them. It was leading as straight as a railroad tangent for the wide mouth of a cañon that stood out against the star-lit sky like the peep-sight of a rifle. A single star blazed and winked at them from the head of the pass. That star was their guide.

Ralph knew very well that the retreating band would leave men at the entrance to the cañon, and if those scouts should see him he would never get another chance at that party. They would vanish like the quail of their own mesas and the girl would be killed. He did not dare to follow that trail directly to the foothills. He touched Yavapai's knee as the old man forged up alongside him.

"I'm goin' to keep to the west, Yavapai, and go up the next cañon. I want to keep the ridge between us. They'll have scouts in this place. We can push up the next cañon to the saddle and then wait for 'em.

"That's good," Yavapai grunted. "They won't be lookin' fer us. They're most likely figgerin' on the soldiers takin' their trail. That bunch is most likely movin' up the pass right now and if they ever git into the big timber they'll be as hard to ketch as a flea on a buffalo-hide. Come on then."

"I'd like to get ahead of 'em to the next water," whispered Ralph. "If we could beat 'em to that and get ahead of 'em we could hold 'em till the Critten men get up. We'd better mark the trail here extra clearly so the men behind us—if there is any body behind us—can follow and see what we've done here."

He hung an old canteen ostentatiously upon a bush and piled some stones Indian fashion to show that he had taken his men by the western path.

"A fool could read that," commented Yavapai. "They'll have a lot who kin read that sign. Come on."

XII

A HOT sun streaming down on her defenceless head; a horrible pitching sensation; a deadly nausea; a feeling as if she were bound to a red-hot grill, and Margaret Burt came back to life. She could move neither hand nor foot. She found that she was lashed fast to a saddle on a trotting mule whose every step was keenest torture to her. Her head ached, and her mouth and throat were parched and dry. She tried to raise a hand and found that while her elbows were lashed behind her back she could move her hands. Each foot was tied to a stirrup leather, and the edges of the straps cut her knees. The trotting of that mule was torture to her. For a brief second she thought that she must be dead and in hell. Then realization came, and along with it came tears—the first that she had shed since leaving Yuma.

Grouped about the mule a score of figures trotted slowly along. From time to time a half-naked warrior would prod the weary mule with a knife or an arrow-point and at each prod the nearly exhausted animal leaped forward half his length bringing a subconscious groan from the suffering girl.

Her second glance was worse than the first for with that glance she suddenly knew where she was and how she had come there. Of the last few minutes in that burning hell inside the Stevens house she had fortunately no recollection. She remembered the rush on the door; she remembered the last soldier carried off his feet as the door was knocked from its hinges and she remembered being crowded back into the corner as Kelly swung his ax.

After that all was blank. She knew nothing of how she had been jerked from that flaming inferno, fighting, struggling; of how two brawny warriors had tied her to the saddle that two others had cinched on the loose mule. All that she knew now was that she was a prisoner in the hands of men who, by all that she had heard about them, had no redeeming qualities of any kind, much less those of mercy or of kindliness.

Certainly from their appearance little was to be expected. About twenty-five men were grouped about her, moving at a jog-trot, the Indian trail gait that in time will kill even a gray wolf. Their great width of shoulder and depth of girth made them appear smaller than they actually were. A few wore dirty white cotton cloths wrapped turban-like about their heads; still others wore war-hats made of the feathers of hawks and eagles. Except for long buck-skin moccasins that reached to the middle of the thigh and were suspended by thongs from the breech-clout they were naked. Each man carried a rifle, bow and quiver, knife and hatchet and a small tightly woven wicker basket in which he carried his drinking-water.

The thick black manes of their hair were cut square across the lines of the neck and forehead and nearly every man carried a medicine-bag in which some specially powerful medicine was carried to ensure luck upon the war-trail. Some of the faces were painted with black and red marks; nearly all were tattooed on cheeks and chins with hideous black lines and circles that looked like powder burns, and in all their eyes, sunken, twinkling with the evil light of gratified blood-lust, Margaret read that which sent the blood chilling in terror to her heart.

She could not have been expected to know much about them. Few in those days did know very much about the Tinneh or the Inde as the Apache called himself. In point of fact there still remains a great deal to be known.

Those who have known best say that of all the Indian tribes upon the continent of North America with which the white man has come in contact, mostly to his own disadvantage except when the whites were overpoweringly superior in numbers, the Apache was the most dangerous. Uniting the military virtues of bravery; the ability to live on the few things that their barren land produced; marching powers that the best troops have never equalled with the barbarous vices of cruelty and rapacity, he was an enemy that the whole Frontier had learned to dread. Like Ishmael of old his hand was against every man and after a successful raid few could follow him in his rapid retreats across those terrible *Jornados del muerte*—journeys of death—across the hot lands to the fastnesses of his own wild hills.

There were many branches of the tribe in the limits of the territory of Arizona. Some indeed had been subjected to the softening influences of civilization at the hands of the early Spanish missions but in the main they were all alike for they had all learned that the white man could not be trusted. All the tribes held captives as slaves, though the treatment accorded to these slaves varied. If a prisoner was strong enough to survive the vicissitudes of the savage life he was frequently enslaved. If he could not stand the life or gave any sign of weakness he was promptly killed. If a woman she was generally taken by a warrior as wife or concubine and if a prisoner ever was caught escaping there was no mercy shown. As a rule they were killed by being staked out near an ant hill or by crucifixion.

As a matter of fact that band raiding far to the south of its own country had met with far greater success than it had any right to expect. True their medicine-man had sprinkled every warrior of that party with the *hoddentin*, the sacred meal that ensures success; true he had blessed the drinking-tubes and the scratching-sticks of every young warrior of the party, but Deltchay—Red Ant—reflected as he trotted along ahead of the mule on which the prisoner was tied he had lost five men already on this raid. True he had killed a number of the hated white men, but an Apache considered it only a modified form of success if on his side he lost a single warrior. He had taken a mule, five rifles, five pistols that were better than any in the tribe and best of all he had a prisoner.

His eyes fairly gloated over Margaret who, tired, suffering, nearly dead from heat, thirst and utter exhaustion, was yet fairer than any prisoner he had ever seen. He calculated quickly that he could sell her to the Cocopas for many rifles or, he could keep her for himself. If he dared get in touch with the white men himself he could demand a heavy ransom for her if she should live. They would doubtless pay heavily for her. They would have to. Deltchay was satisfied.

It had been a simple thing to waylay that wagon-train in the narrow Bear Creek Cañon. The wagons had been driven by Mexicans, and even raiding Apaches could tell from a distance the difference between Mexicans who squealed and ran leaving their wagons in the hands of the raiders and the hard-bitten white men who fought as if they loved it. They had not got much from those wagons; a little powder, an ax, some food and many, many packages tied in white skin coverings that were covered with black tattoo marks. He signaled to his men to spread out, for the soft sand of the plain had given place to hard-baked soil again. Instantly they scattered like desert quail.

No one could surpass the Apache in cunning when on a war-trail. Dodging, twisting, turning on his own tracks, scattering when on hard ground where the tracks could not easily be seen, pursuit was almost certain to be retarded if not actually given up as hopeless.

"Huh!"

Deltchay looked up wonderingly as Burned Bear, a warrior on his first war-path, unslung his wicker water-basket and handed it to Margaret.

Though her elbows were lashed behind her back her hands were free. She seized the basket and raised it to her lips that were cracked and bleeding from the heat and dust, and managed to pour a few drops of water into her mouth. The greater part of the water slopped over her neck and breast, but the few drops that she swallowed revived her.

They took up the trail again moving at a trot as before, only this time Burned Bear led the mule. In and out between the olive-green clumps of the mesquite scrub they moved, never breaking the gait, never raising their eyes from their feet. The trail was clear; the keen-eyed scouts far out to right and left would see to that and all that the main body had to do was to keep moving as fast as they could till they should reach the safety of that mountain wall that rose before them at the edge of the plain. Far back in those hills, two days journey to the northeast, lay the *rancheria* where they lived; in the dark mountains above Wickenburg that later was to be the scene of the Loring or Wickenburg massacre. It was called impartially by both names. There they had gathered loot from many a raid on the puny settlements that lay along the Border too weak to resist; too plucky to abandon their lands to the war-parties that raided to their very doors.

It was nearly dark when they reached the foot of the hills where the mesquite scrub and the tall pale specters of the palo verde and the flaming ocatilla gave place to the low-lying willow brush with its pink blossoms and the stiff mountain mahogany. From the mouth of that cañon a little stream trickled out into the sand to be swallowed up after the fashion of most streams in Arizona by the desert.

Squatting at once on their heels as they halted, the men produced strips of half-cooked meat from their pouches with a few handfuls of *pinole*, which is a coarse meal made from dried corn pounded between two rocks. A few had as a special delicacy a few gourds of flour of sunflower seeds mixed with the kernels of piñon nuts.

A warrior untied Margaret's feet and jerked her from the saddle, the quick flash of a knife before her shrinking eyes warning her what would happen if she should attempt to escape.

Attempt to escape? How could she even think of it? A delicately nurtured girl, utterly unused to hardships, who had within forty-eight hours seen violent death for the first time. She could not even think connectedly as she gulped down the bitter flour and tore ravenously at a bit of half-raw meat that a warrior flung to her as one would fling a morsel to a dog.

Mercifully they paid no attention to her. That would come later.

For two hours they squatted on the ground under the bushes; then at a word from their leader they were off again up the cañon heading for the top of the saddle where the cañon debouched from the great main range. Dusk had settled like a veil and the gnome-like figures of the warriors wove in and out among tree-boles and great rocks like shifting smoke-wreaths. In the next valley to their right there was a good stream where they could camp in safety, secure from pursuit. In the meantime the four scouts who had dropped unbidden to the rear would give ample notice if there should be any pursuit.

They topped the ridge and the cool night-air smote Margaret's hot face like a wet towel. It was raining lightly now; the first shower of the rainy season. In ten minutes the water was pouring down as if the very windows of heaven had been opened. In another ten minutes it had stopped as suddenly and again they plodded on.

For Margaret Burt there was no problem of what to do. There was nothing that could be done. She could only pray for death and that was not to be had for the asking. She was stunned by the overpowering suddenness of the blow that had fallen. Now that she had eaten, little flashes of returning strength came to her. She could not believe what her own eyes had seen in that terrible affair in the Stevens' house. Mrs. Ames and Corporal Kelly and all the rest of those willing, patient men could not be dead. Surely God could not have permitted such a terrible thing to have happened. She felt that she would waken at any moment to find that she had been in a terrible nightmare.

The rain lashing like shot into her face startled her. First she shrank back as Burned Bear, leading the mule, stopped under a great beech-tree that spread like an umbrella over the path. Every one of the men with her knew with the unerring instinct of those whose lives depend on reading cold facts that that sudden shower of rain was their best friend. It would completely wash away all signs of the trail. No footprints would now show where they had come up the cañon.

They worked their way across a patch of sand at the top of the "saddle"; then across a tiny mesa where the grass grew ankle-deep and, in single file now, took the trail on the downward slope.

But that band had reckoned without their hosts. Thinking only of possible pursuit by the soldiers or by men from the ranches who were only recruits in the arts of the hills and trails, they had never thought of any other danger. Those eight men whom they had followed to the very gates of the white man's post at Fort Critten were entirely outside their reckoning. Had they known of the hurried departure of that Galvanized gang they would not have rested easier because of the knowledge.

The scouts left behind at the mouth of the cañon did their work carefully and well. Two men climbed swiftly to a little rounded knoll to the east of the entrance and two to the west, where they lay carefully concealed beneath a tangle of low-growing brush. Their dress and their war-bonnets blended so perfectly with the leafy background that even in the brightest sunlight only a trained eye could have detected them. They waited for an hour and then, assured that there was no pursuit, they took the trail at a slinging trot and so never saw what took place behind them.

When darkness had fairly come, Ralph and Yavapai pushed on across the plain at a trot keeping cautiously to the soft ground and always riding from dark clump to dark clump where they waited for the men behind to catch up. Moving rapidly where they could, slowly where they must, they entered the cañon to the west of the main gorge and pushed rapidly up the long slope that led to the summit of the saddle on which all those cañons gave. Once astride that saddle, they halted just below the rim so that they should not be silhouetted against the skyline. Even though the night was so far very dark they would take no chances.

The rain squall caught them at the top of the ridge and it left them cold, dripping and cursing under their breaths.

"I'd give a whole dollar fer some of that rot-gut whisky back at Salsipuedes that I've drunk when I didn't need it," said Yavapai. "Thank the Lord there comes the day. Now what?"

"Cast along the ridge for sign," growled Ralph. "They came up that eastern cañon and they must have crossed the saddle somewhere to our right." He too was cold and wet and the rain had not improved his temper.

They lost a full hour on that ridge before they found what they sought. Finally Ralph snapped his fingers gently. He was standing at the edge of the patch of sand where the grass of the tiny mesa began.

"Here's a hoof-print," he whispered. "The mule passed here. We're mighty close on 'em, too. That print has been made since the rain."

"How do you figure that?" demanded Carter.

Good man though he was on a trail the deductions that Yavapai and Ralph would make sometimes astounded him.

Ralph grinned at him, pleasantly. He could afford to be pleasant now with that fresh hoof-print before him.

"By usin' the senses God gave me. Don't you see that the sand is still stickin' to the grass stems where the mule trod them down? That means that the grass was wet when the mule stepped on it. It was wet from the rain. That's how I know that they passed after the shower. Come on now."

Farther along on the mesa they picked up other foot-prints that had indisputably been made after the shower by careless travelers for the band was now feeling very secure. The trail led them along the hillside, but it was slowly dropping into the next valley keeping still to the heavily wooded slope. They could guess that about a mile away it would enter the bottom of the main cañon. Yavapai laid a firm grip on Ralph's shoulder.

"Look over yonder," he whispered.

There was no need for another word. They all saw what he meant. Faint as the filmy edge of fairy lace; lighter than the lightest tinge of tobacco smoke, a blue-gray mist of smoke was oozing slowly up against the background of dark pine-trees in the bottom of the cañon. While they stood watching it, wondering what their next move should be, the silence was shattered by the shrill bray of a mule that echoed time and again from the walls of the gorge below them.

Long before the first echo had died away Carter and Duryea leaped for their pack-mules. Their noses were already raised; their eyes closed as in prayer in their desire to answer to that hail and only the vise-like pressure on their nostrils prevented them.

"Gosh! That was a close call. They'd have given the whole show away," muttered Lee. "What now, captain?"

"Wait till Yavapai and I get back. I want to see the lay of the ground before we attack. I'm not goin' to pick up somethin' only to find that we've got to let go of it."

He and Yavapai vanished in the brush and the men waited impatiently for their return. Almost an hour passed before the two came back and Ives fairly jumped when Ralph drifted quietly into their midst.

"My Lord, captain, how you made me jump! What now?"

"Have to postpone it a bit. That's all. They got scared when the mule brayed and pulled out again. The mule made them think that some body might have heard him. They don't suspect any pursuit. It's only caution on their part. They've just moved up over the next ridge to the east. See——"

He pointed to a little movement among the tops of the bushes on the ridge across the cañon from them.

"We scouted their campin'-place pretty thoroughly. They've got the girl and they've got a mule. We're sure hot on the trail. They must have just got into camp when the mule brayed. You know a mule brays when he reaches camp—a horse when he leaves it."

"Well?"

"I wrote another message for anybody who may be following us and I pegged it to the trunk of that tree where they were making their camp. A child could find it. As soon as we've given them time to move down off that summit we'll take the trail again."

A few minutes later Yavapai hailed him softly.

"They didn't take the time to fill their water-baskets in the stream below here," he said shortly. "I scouted the whole stream. There's only one place where they could get down to the water. The banks are ten foot high everywhere else and they didn't water there. It's certain that they've gone on to the next cañon to get water to camp. Come on. Any one behind us can't miss this place where the trail forks. Come on I say. Let's git ahead."

He led the little column into the brush on the eastern slope.

XIII

FROM the summit of the ridge where they had concealed themselves above the valley where they had seen the smoke, Ralph and Yavapai had got a comprehensive view of the land. The cañon at their feet merged into a box-cañon. They could see its walls rising sheer above the tree tops in the bottom of the gorge and it ran almost due northwestward. Beyond the next high ridge to the east they could see yet another "hog-back" that ran in the same direction. The deduction was simple: All the valleys on that side of the range led from the great central peak that flung its bald granite summit to the sky and opened out on the flat plains at their feet. Somewhere in that wild jumble of peaks and valleys they would find the men they sought. From their knowledge of the Indians they felt certain that they had some central hiding-place where they had established their *rancheria*, where they hid their old men, women and children, and to which they carried their loot after each successful raid. It remained for them to follow cautiously so that the pursuit would not be discovered and to blaze their own trail so clearly that men who might be traveling behind them could not mistake it. Everything depended on that party from Fort Critten. If that party did not materialize it would mean that Ralph and Yavapai with the seven Galvanized men would be left alone to face a fairly large band of desperate warriors already inflamed by numerous successes.

To mark their own trail needed no care, for their ponies' feet so cut the wet earth that a child could have followed them. To cross the cañon under the eyes of the men that he was sure had been left on the top of the next ridge gave Ralph more uneasiness. They could not cross farther up; the walls of the box-cañon would prevent that. They must go back along the ridge and cross the valley below where they were. So back they went under the protecting shelter of the hill-shoulder for a good half-mile when they halted under a great juniper-tree for directions.

"We'll cross one man at a time," said Ralph. "A single man can pass unseen where more would be noticed. See that crooked beech over yonder ——"

He pointed to a huge beech-tree that

showed like a dappled deer's hide in the sunlight.

"Work up toward that tree and meet there. Now—one man at a time. You first, Lee. Lead your horses."

It was a stiff climb down and up and they were panting and drenched with sweat when they reached the tree.

"All right so far. Come on."

Again they breasted the long slope secure in the knowledge that so far at least they were unseen. At the top of the ridge they found the trail again and followed it leisurely. In the second cañon the hoof-marks of the mule turned sharp off to the left and went up the valley toward the great central peak. Yavapai nudged Ralph for all conversation had ceased. His finger pointed to a little object along the path.

It was nothing but a little mass of chewed pinole meal that some warrior had spat upon the trail, but it was moist and as Yavapai placed it against his cheek it felt warm.

"Not ten minutes ahead of us," he whispered. He barely breathed the words. "We'd better leave the horses here. They'll only hamper us in a fight among these rocks. And if a horse-shoe hits a stone now, we're done for."

"Slip all the bridles off an' turn the horses loose," whispered Ralph. "They won't stray from water. If we tie 'em up the pack-mules 'll bray."

In five minutes the bridles were off and the horses and mules were grazing contentedly on the curly mesquite grass that grew under every bush and the little party again took the trail.

The pursued had done exactly what Yavapai and Ralph had foreseen they would do. They had left two men at each ridge in turn as they passed, but even the wariest scouts had no reason to suspect that in each turn and twist of that devious trail their pursuers had outguessed them. They had had no reason to fear an actual pursuit. They had simply acted on Indian instinct that told them that every trail is a dangerous trail till it is ended.

As a matter of fact that trail ended far up the cañon where the three box-cañons converged upon the great central peak. The steep, granite walls merged gradually into the cliff-like barrier of the mountain. The upper slope thrust forward from the cliff and formed an overhang over a great flat space making a great shallow cave against the cliff. Before that cave the ground sloped gently to the east and was covered with great boulders and stunted bushes, forming an ideal place for defence—a difficult one to attack. As a defensive position there were two drawbacks however. There was no water and there was no get-away. If the defenders should be actually attacked there they would find themselves like Fitz-James with his back to the rock. Except by breaking through the lines of the attacker or by climbing up the narrow paths at each end of the cave there could be no escape.

From that rocky platform tiny wisps of smoke crept slowly up in the warm Spring air. The leaves of the juniper-trees still gleamed wetly from the recent rain and occasional little puffs of the morning wind brought little showers down upon the hot rocks. A dozen wickiups sprawled along the slope and the moving figures of women and children flitting among the rocks and trees showed that the place was alive.

A clatter of shod hoofs in the valley below the *rancheria* drew an old man to the edge of the encampment. He squatted behind a rock, raised a hand to guard his eyes from the glare and sat peering down the draw. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and gave a quavering shout that waked the camp to instant life. Old men hitherto hidden in the wickiups crept out, women and children sprang from nowhere and added their voices to the uproar. But it was a very modified uproar that greeted the returning party. They had learned wisdom from experience.

Never pausing at the edge of the table-land, the returning warriors pushed their way to the center of the place. As man after man came over the edge of the raise, many of them bearing the new guns or pistols that they had taken in the fight at Stevens' ranch, shouts of approbation rose and when last of all the mule staggered up with Margaret half-fainting in the saddle a general uproar arose. Squaws seized sticks and ran forward striking viciously at the shrinking girl, and one hideous old relic of many a successful raid thrust the point of a dull knife deep in the girl's shoulder, winning a sudden shriek of pain.

A blow from a warrior sent the old woman spinning back among the fires and a moment later a warrior cut loose the thongs and dragged the exhausted girl to the ground.

For a brief moment she lay there; then she rose and staggered away from the group followed only by two or three children who regarded her with curiosity. Neither squaws nor warriors paid any more attention to her for they knew that she could not escape and they were anxious to hear the details of the raid.

Margaret staggered across the grass to the door of a little wickiup. It was by no means inviting, but it promised privacy of a sort and that she had not had since that fight at the ranch that seemed to her now to have taken place a thousand years ago. She felt that her mind would fail her if she could not find rest and quiet.

Like every other lodge in that camp the one she entered was a general store-house where they had gathered a great pile of roasted mescal, bags of seeds of all kinds to be used for bread, piles of bows and arrows; jerked mule or pony meat. In short a well-supplied fortalice; the *omnium gatherum* of a nomadic band.

That one shriek that Margaret gave when the old woman had prodded her with the knife had done much more than simply amuse the onlookers. It reached the ears of Yavapai Steve and Ralph Mason as they crouched low under a great madrono-bush far up the slope scanning the line of the cañon below them. They had known from the smokes that they were close to the main camp. The sound of Margaret's voice told them that they were closer than they had thought. Leaving Ralph where he was, Yavapai crept still higher up the hill to a vantage-point behind a boulder. Presently he came back even more softly than he had gone.

"It's the biggest *rancheria* I've ever seen," he whispered. "It must have been here for some time. They've just taken the girl into the camp. They've got the girl and the mule an', if I know 'em, they won't be stayin' here long. They never do. They won't take the chance of havin' somebody foller 'em and maybe attack 'em. They're liable to break camp at any time. You see they know derned well that what they've done will set the whole district in a blaze."

"If they should succeed in gettin' the girl away what would they do with her Yavapai?"

"They'll take her along if we don't stop 'em. If she stands the trip some warrior'll take her for his woman. Either that or they'll trade her off to some other tribe for guns or ponies. If she can't stand the trip they'll kill her. What you aimin' to do, captain?"

Ralph sat quietly chewing a grass stem. He knew perfectly well what he meant to do—what he must do for there was no other course. The nine of them must attack that *rancheria*, but—how? He whispered his intention to Yavapai who smiled grim approval.

"Of course, Yavapai, by all the laws of common sense we ought not to try it. It's suicidal without some one to back us up."

"Huh? By all the laws o' common sense every derned one of us ought to have died a year ago. We've took chances nobody else dared take along this Border. What's your idea about jumpin' 'em?"

Ralph told him.

"Look at the place," he said shortly. "The overhang of the rock will prevent 'em from gettin' out by way of the cliff. Also it will keep us from attackin' from above. There's just three ways they can get out after the attack starts. They can either rush us. I ain't much afraid of that. Then they might get a man or two up the narrow path at the side of the place. But a man at each side can cover those paths. They've got no water, Steve, except what little they have in camp now. We've got to keep 'em from getting the water. It's near dark now.

"If we attack 'em now it will mean that we'll have to hold 'em on that ground through the night. I don't believe we can do it in the dark. The only advantage we've got is in our better rifles. That will be discounted by night when we can't see to use them. I think we'd better hide out till daylight and attack at first dawn. There's another reason too for waitin'. If the Critten men are on our trail they should be within' sound of our rifles by sunup. If we attack at daylight we've got all day to make a stand-off for the men from Fort Critten to get up."

"Suppose Critten never got the message," said Yavapai soberly. His eyes were gleaming curiously.

"Then it won't make any difference," said Ralph briefly. "We've got the ponies down the valley to get away with if we can. If we can't get away—well, we're only outlaw men anyway. We have n't got any country now you know, Yavapai," he said curtly.

There was a note in his voice that made the old man look long at him but he said nothing.

THEY drew back up the ridge and lay hidden in a juniper thicket where they spent the night. Long before the first gray light filtered through the tree tops each man had been given his instructions.

"You, Barr, take the southwest side. Fenton take this side. See that your canteens are filled, and pick places where you can command both sides of the cañon. By doin' that you'll get a straight line of fire for yourself and you can cross-fire with the other man on the far side. The rest of you come with me. We'll string out across the valley. No man must leave that cave where they are. I look to you two men on the flanks to prevent that. If they ever get men in the woods behind us, our fat's in the fire. Take your places so that each man can see and cover the men to his right and left. If they try to rush us—it ain't likely they will; Apaches never do—but if they do rush us, close in slowly toward the center. Remember that we can't be driven back as long as the ends of the line hold. Anybody got anything to say?"

Duryea looked at him quizzically.

"I did have a whole lot o' things to say, but in the light o' present events it don't seem necessary to say 'em. I wish now I'd written 'em down in my will. One question, captain. They'll send the squaws down for the water. They always do. Must we fire on women?"

They waited eagerly for his answer, though they well-knew what it would be.

"No. Yavapai and I'll be in the center by the creek. We'll attend to that. Ready? Then get to your places, men. If you want to call me give a call like a jay-bird. Scatter."

He watched carefully till he saw that every man was in place. Then he settled down to wait for something to happen. It came very suddenly.

Two warriors came out of a wickiup and, bow in hand, moved slowly down the slope chatting in a low tone as they came down toward the stream. One, two, three hundred yards they came ——

A sudden spurt of flame from over a dead log; a long resonant roar and the leading warrior sank slowly to his knees. That was Lee's work. Before the second man could even halt, Yavapai's heavy bullet took him in the throat.

Instantly that *rancheria* became a bedlam.

For a few brief seconds the clearing seemed filled with men, women and children running for safety to the base of the cliff beneath the overhang of the rock where the scattered boulders offered cover. In two minutes quiet had come again. The entire band had scattered like the quail of their own mesas, but every hole and rock and tree now sheltered a warrior; a grim-faced fighting-man who knew that he was fighting literally with his back to the wall and that in case of defeat he would find no mercy.

Two of the women dragged the nearly unconscious Margaret up the slope and into the cave, and before she could rouse herself to resist, they had lashed hands and feet fast with a dozen bow-strings that cut like knives into the tender flesh of her wrists and ankles. She was now their best hope in case of a defeat.

From time to time a warrior seeking cover further in advance dodged from his shelter, but a shot from one side or the other promptly sent him reeling back. The dead bodies of the two Indians still lay in the path where they had fallen. No one ventured to touch them till Duryea gave a great shout, that there was no mistaking and plunged forward from his cover.

"I'm goin' to get their scalps," he shouted above the turmoil of the fight. "Let 'em know who they 're dealin' with. Keep up the fire!"

There was no need for the injunction. They redoubled the fire and the roar of the heavy carbines was continuous as it flung back in thunder from the rocky walls of the cañon.

Duryea dashed back from his gruesome work, waving his ghastly trophies. A dozen arrows followed him to his shelter.

"I never did like to do it," he panted. "But they sure do hate to have happen to them what they love to do to some one else. Look out! Two of 'em are after Carter."

A snap-shot from Ralph brought down one sturdy warrior as he was leaping from rock to rock in a hasty advance on Carter. The other man flung to a halt as a bullet from Yavapai sent a shower of gravel in his face. But inch by inch, in spite of the grueling rifle-fire that took toll of them the line of the defenders managed to push farther and farther to the front. It was just a question of time till that line would be far enough from the cave to allow men to creep into the rocks from either end. When that should happen the white men would have to leave—if there should be any to leave.

Every device known to Ralph and Yavapai was practised. A sombrero showed over a rock to draw fire did not even win an arrow. The stratagem was too apparent. Arrows began to drop on the heads of the little line. The Indians had discovered their shelter and were trying to drop arrows on them from above. One long shaft dropping with a hiss lodged deep in Ralph's left leg. He cut away the feather, drew the shaft through the wound and tied a rag about the hole.

"Hurt much?" asked Yavapai, seeing what had happened.

"Huh. I've felt worse—and better. They're crowdin' us a bit, Yavapai."

"They are so. Wonder if them soldiers are within' hearin'?"

If he could have seen a mile behind him Yavapai would not have asked that question. Even with Perkins and Barton along with him Burt might not have found the trail but for the marks that Ralph had so plainly set along the track where he had gone. And each point that he marked was so suggestive of urgent need for haste that the little column had lost no time. Slipping, sliding, sweating they toiled up and over the great saddle of the pass, found the mark where Ralph had changed his course and had cut across the range, ran into the ponies that he had turned loose before his final movement into position for his attack and like bloodhounds that run mute once blood has been scented on the trail they headed up the last valley in which lay the *rancheria*.

At the abandoned camp they paused but a moment. Barton sensed what had happened and cast about for a sign. He found it in freshly made foot-prints where the horses had stepped in the soft earth. Night caught them at the foot of the last ridge where, panting, swearing at their impotence in the darkness they lay with their reins tied to their wrists waiting for the daylight.

IT WAS long before the first light trickled down into the dark depths of the gorge. When it was light enough to see, Perkins picked up the tracks again. For a half-mile they followed silently. Suddenly he stopped and threw up a warning hand.

"Listen!" he said. "What's that? That's a rifle-shot. There ——"

There was no mistaking it. It was the full roar of a heavy rifle.

"Come on, men! No time to stop now."

And without even a thought of an advance guard or of a scout the whole column pushed forward in headlong haste for the quick, sharp rattle of rifle-fire two miles to their front told them that the fight already had begun.

"Better fire a shot to let 'em know we're comin'——"

Barton's heavy pistol roared and the good news reached Yavapai now only a half-mile away as he ducked from rock to tree trying to cover three men at once with his rifle.

"The Critten men are up!" His voice shrilled high above the noises of the fight.

The advance swept up the cañon in a wildly riding column. Under the last ridge Perkins jerked his horse to a halt and pitched out of saddle, rifle in hand.

"Swing forward in line now."

With their objective clearly defined before them they paid scant attention to Burt toiling painfully along in the rear of the line that swept forward at a run. As they came abreast of him Ralph sprang to his feet with a shout. It was the psychological moment for a charge. If the line of soldiers ever stopped they would fight from cover and the fight would last forever.

"Come on!" he shouted. "Come on an' take the place!"

His words and gesture both aided him. So did the shrill Rebel yell that rose from those seven Galvanized men as they leaped from their cover and surged forward into the open behind their leader. The line went forward in a wild wave that washed over and between the great boulders, that swirled up the rock-ribbed slope like surf on a rocky beach and that sucked back in little eddies of war and strife from the crannies of the rock face where isolated warriors fought like wildcats in the backwash of ruin.

Warrior after warrior seeing that wild advance sprang to his feet and ran; first from rock to rock then to the great boulders where under the projecting ledge they found their last shelter and with knife and lance and clubbed rifle they sold their lives as dearly as they could. On the right Burt toiling adjured his men to move yet faster. On the left Yavapai and Ralph pushed the Galvanized men forward under a stream of vitriolic oaths which were entirely unnecessary.

In the center Barton seeing Ralph ahead of him strove to overtake him. He was in fact hard upon Ralph's heels when a wild, white-turbaned warrior who had been lying upon his face bow in hand on top of a flat rock some four feet above their heads, threw himself upon him knife in hand. There was no time to guard. Barton went down under the impact like a pole-axed ox and the two fought and squirmed and twisted and wrestled first with one on top and then the other till Lee settled it. He dropped his rifle-butt squarely on the black-maned head and the Indian quietly collapsed.

"Somebody come an' carry out your bar-tender," called Lee. "He is killed, I think."

"You're a —— liar," gasped Barton, sitting up.

The next moment he fell back with blood flowing in two great streams from mouth and breast where the Apache knife had gone home, and where it still stuck.

Duryea dragged him aside and laid him under the shelter of a log where no arrow could reach him and then ran forward. He met Yavapai coming back.

"What luck, Steve?" he panted.

"The best luck in the world, son. There go the wickiups."

A tongue of flame licked over the grass roofs of the lodges and shot crackling up against the cliff. The few warriors who had lived through that attack were scrambling up and over the wooded ridge and in the place of the recent *rancheria* squaws and children had already begun their wailing over the dead as the victors gathered to take account of stock.

"Where's the girl? She's what we came for. Where is she?"

The word ran from man to man and reached old Burt painstakingly searching every nook and cranny of the place. It was Barr who found her tied hand and foot, abandoned by her guards, but safe and sound.

XIV

SUCCESS needs little savor. The fact that they had done what they had started out to do; had rescued Margaret from the hands of her savage captors; that they had utterly destroyed the *rancheria* and had scattered the few remaining warriors among the hills went far to dispel the feelings of dismay with which the victors looked over the scene.

Twelve warriors dead or dying lay behind rocks or in holes where they had taken refuge. Two women had been accidentally killed. This was regrettable to be sure, but after all a toothless hag could in a scuffle send home a long knife as well as the best warrior and any boy of fourteen who could draw a twenty-six inch arrow to the head was a putative brave. The wickiups were in flames and a tremendous amount of supplies had been destroyed. Against this, Burt, who was taking account of stock with Ralph, checked off in his mind their own losses: Three civilians killed at Bear Creek and three wagons burned; five men and one woman killed at Stevens' *rancho* and on the ground at his feet two of his men had been killed, three others and Ralph had been wounded and Barton could not recover. The aborigine lacking the most recent arms and weapons had done the best he could with knife and bow and ax and the few guns that he had stolen and his best was formidable at least. One thing though was fairly clear—that band would raid no more.

Burt led Margaret to the best place he could find for her; a pile of half-tanned skins in the shade of a tree and left her there to regain her composure while he attended to matters that were equally important. She was safe at least. She was unhurt except where the bow-strings had cut wrists and ankles and the happiness and relief that followed her release were like a tonic to her. Later she would live again through every phase of her terrible experience, but just now she knew nothing but relief. She shuddered a little as she sank back upon the heaped skins, threw her arms about her father's neck, and burst into tears.

"There—there, my dear."

Old Burt patted her clumsily upon cheek and shoulder, his eyes misty with unshed tears.

"Brace up a bit, my dear. All will come right yet."

"Captain—Captain Burt. Come here a minute, will you?"

He recognized Yavapai's voice and rose to go to him. He found the old man tugging nervously at his gray beard.

"I was just tellin' Captain Mason—There's no use huntin' them rascals any further. They're miles away by now headin' fer Canada. O' course me an' Mason an' the Galvanized men *kin* take the trail an' run 'em down, but it ain't wuth while. They've scattered just like quail. They won't get together again fer three days yit. What d' you aim to do, captain?"

"Do?" Burt looked at Yavapai in perplexity. "Why, straighten things up here and then move back again to the post of course. How's Barton?"

"He's dyin'. That Apache knife went deep. Just like the time Major Lynch was knifed. He's dyin' all right! I'm goin' down to the crick right now to fetch some water fer him."

He strode away on his errand swinging in his hand a tightly woven basket in which to carry the water.

Burt realized that he was confronted with a serious problem. Ralph Mason, an escaped ex-Confederate prisoner who was charged with murder was here in his camp after having escaped from his guard-house. In spite of the fact that Ralph had rendered invaluable aid in the fight, that without him and his men the Apaches would never have been trailed to their camp and brought to bay, Burt knew that duty demanded that Ralph should be returned to custody till he should be freed by proper authority. But—Ralph had at his back Yavapai Steve and seven others—The Galvanized men. Would he allow himself to be rearrested? If he should resist, Burt knew that he would have on his hands a fight beside which the one that he had just gone through would be as child's play.

In the meantime Barton was dying!

At that thought Burt's heart gave a great leap. He was sorry for Barton, of course. Barton had been of very great use to him but—he owed Barton two thousand dollars and Barton had been the man who had held him up for the Walters bid on that wood contract. It was Barton that he had to fear in the future. Perkins of himself could do nothing. It was Barton who, holding his notes for money lost, held the whip hand and now Barton was going. Of course he would eventually pay to Barton's estate the money that he owed.

Perkins found Barton lying under the log where Duryea had laid him. He dragged him out very carefully and did what he could for him. He had sent Yavapai scurrying for water and then he bent over his partner and drew aside the heavy shirt and looked at the wounds. They were bad enough. There could be no hope of a recovery. Perkins was fond of Barton in his own way and his going pained him. Presently Barton's eyes opened and he grinned feebly.

"Huh! They got me at last—Perk. Didn't they?"

"A knife, old man. Man got you from top of a rock."

"——Injun. Did you get *him?*"

"Ay! Lee smashed him with a gun-butt. Killed him."

A faint squirming of the white-turbaned figure near by gave the lie to Perkins, but he did not see that. Barton spoke again:

"I'm a goner this time Perk"—His labored breathing, almost stertorous, told the truth even better than his words. "While—you're here Perk—You an' me has always split even—That wood contract—That we was holdin' old Burt up fer—Let that go, Perk. There's somethin' better—Now——"

"Yes—I know—I know," said poor Perkins miserably. He was grieved beyond telling at this sudden taking off of Barton in the midst of success.

"You—don't know, an' you never will know—if you interrupt me in dyin' ——"

With a spasmodic jerk Barton raised himself a little.

"I'm dyin', Perk. But I ain't crazy like you think. I got to do my dyin' in my own way. You look in my safe back in the room behind the bar, Perk, an' you'll find somethin' that'll pay you. Get the package that's in there. It's got no address on it—I tore it off——"

"Yes. All right. I *sabe.*"

Perkins was certain that this was the delirium that he had often heard of.

"No you don't *sabe*. You do like I tell you. Git that package. It was meant fer

Mason, Perk. It's got a lot of railroad bonds in it. Salable bonds. Understand now? They're yours fer the takin'. Don't let Mason git 'em, Perk. He kept us from gittin' that wood contract—by sayin' he'd tell about our deal with Burt. If we'd got that contract we'd have been startin' fer Frisco town an' maybe I wouldn't have been knifed. Don't let him have 'em I say—I——"

His hand slipped and Barton fell back just as Yavapai came around the corner of the log, every hair in his gray beard trembling with the force of his passion. He set the wicker water-basket down very gently and turned on Perkins, after one brief look at Barton.

"I'm plumb sorry I did n't git the water to him in time," he said softly. "He'll need water where he 's gone to. So he had that package locked up in his safe all the time, did he? And he 's give it to you, hey? Huh! Oh, yes, I heard every word of it. Captain Burt! Come over here just a minute, will you. It's important."

Burt came to him wonderingly. What could be more important than what had just happened?

"I just want to tell you that Barton has just died. Before he passed out I heard him tell Perkins here that he has in his safe in his store back in Salsipuedes a package of salable railroad bonds that belongs to Captain Mason. I happened to know that Mason's been lookin' fer that package fer two months. Barton stole 'em——"

"Jerry didn't steal 'em," cried Perkins hotly. "That man Scott picked them up, in Bear Creek Cañon where the wagon-train was burned. Jerry got 'em and was keepin' 'em fer Mason. That's all."

"You bet he was takin' care of 'em. Such derned good care that Mason never would have smelled 'em." Yavapai sniffed. "I'll tell Mason. I'm not sorry now that that Apache got Barton. He only got what was comin' to him."

The prone body of the Apache squirmed a little. Yavapai looked at it casually.

"They're just like snakes," he said briefly. "They'll wriggle their tails till the sun goes down. What in ——'s he doin' now?"

The Apache raised himself to his elbow and glared at them. The film over his eyes told them that he was dying, Barton's knife had ensured that without the aid of Lee's gun-butt, but the fires of hate were gleaming as hotly in his dying eyes as if they had just been kindled. He muttered brokenly. Then words came. Yavapai listened carefully. Then he almost leaped forward in his eagerness to hear what the dying Indian was saying.

"*You* hear that, Perkins. You know their lingo as well as I do. Tell Captain Burt what that man says. He'll think I'm lyin' if I tell him."

And Perkins under the compelling gaze of the old man's eyes translated wonderingly.

"He says, 'Crooked Knife'—That's his name—'Crooked Knife takes two white men with him to the Spirit Land.' "

Then Yavapai Steve with the knowledge of the Apache begot by thirty years of life in desert and on mesa, in hills and valleys, spoke. He suspected what was coming, but if he remained silent it might not come at all. There was but one way to get it and that was by insulting a dying man. The braggadocio of the red man might serve Mason now. He spoke directly to the dying Apache.

"Huh! Crooked Knife lies. He never killed a white man till now. He fell on this man. Crooked Knife's blade never touched him. Crooked Knife is a woman who fights with sticks. He never killed a white man."

The Indian fairly spat at him in his anger.

"Crooked Knife has taken two—This man and—another—that shiny-headed warrior in the big house. He had no hair or Crooked Knife would have scalped him to have shown his skin at the council fires."

"My Lord! He means Major Lynch!" Perkins' words were almost jerked from him in his surprize.

"Crooked Knife would have scalped him but he had no scalp. Huh! It was like knifing a sheep. He bleated once and dropped. Three times Crooked Knife struck before the white man could lift his hand."

"Crooked Knife lost his drinking-tube," taunted Yavapai. "The medicine-man knew nothing who let you go on a warpath drinking water with your lips. He is a liar."

"He told Crooked Knife. But Crooked Knife lost his tube. That is why he—dies——"

His arms gave way suddenly and he groveled on his face in the blood-soaked sand of the hot hillside. Yavapai raised himself to his full height and faced the wondering Burt.

"Is Captain Mason still guilty of the murder of Major Lynch?" he asked soberly.

Captain Burt looked long at him and answered slowly:

"I'm mighty glad to say that he is not. This clears him, Steve."

They found Ralph making travois on which to carry the wounded back to Fort Critten. They were simple enough to make, being but two long, thin poles of cottonwood with a cross-bar some eight feet from the butts. Over this frame a pile of blankets and skins was laid on which the wounded man was placed. The half-dozen ponies that the Indians had gathered for future food supplies furnished the motive power. Ralph listened coolly as Captain Burt explained. At first he spoke perfunctorily then, remembering that if it had not been for Ralph Mason and his seven Galvanized Soldiers who held the Apaches to the camp till he got up with the troops, the band with Margaret would be still roaming the hills, he realized the debt that he owed these outlawed men. They were aliens without a land—literally outlaws, the result of their own choice.

"If you and your men hadn't checked them here I'd never have seen my daughter again alive." Burt's voice broke for he loved his daughter very dearly. "I'm gladder of this than I am for anything short of Margaret's rescue. You understand, don't you, captain?"

He had no difficulty in using that title now. It seemed to belong to Ralph Mason as by right.

"Yes, sir. That's all right, Captain Burt. I think I understand."

Undoubtedly Ralph really did understand for his heart was very light as he rode down that valley with Burt at the head of the column on the way back to Critten. Why not? The charge of murder had been removed and he knew that back at the post in the safe in Barton's store was the package that would give him the means to re-establish himself in the world.

What should he do with that money? His first impulse was to go back home and to buy back the old place where four generations of Masons had lived before him.

* * *

THAT had been his first thought. Then they made their first camp at the foot of the great main range where the wooded foothills ran out into the sage-brush where the coolness of the hills merged into the blinding heat-haze of the desert and the sight of the seven Galvanized Soldiers moving quietly about the camp, intent on the little affairs that make men comfortable in uncomfortable places, was like a blow to him.

What would these men do in the future? *They* had no money. They had given to that dear Lost Cause all that he had given. No more—no less—ambition and high hopes, love and almost life itself; and when the Stars and Bars had gone down in final defeat at Appomattox the sun had set for them. He watched them moving about the camp, each man intent on doing little things; generally things for some one else—carrying water, gathering wood. These were the men who had ridden stirrup to stirrup with him in that wild charge on the Federal guns when Pelham died. It struck him like a blow in the face that for all the rest of their lives they would have to do little things for some one else. He swore a great oath and went out supperless upon the desert where, an hour later, Yavapai, hunting a cool place for his bed, found him. The old man, after one appraising glance at Ralph, silently spread his blankets and rolled back luxuriously with his hands under his head. Presently:

"Them stars looks awful good to me," he remarked softly. "I've often wondered how men found out what their names are."

Ralph grunted.

"Look at 'em, will you? They've got names, but I don't know 'em. I've give them names o' my own. That is the big ones. There's—'" His finger thrust like a sign-post at Cassiopeia— "There's Maine. An' there's New Hampshire. An' NewYork. I call them the *fixed* stars. You see they don't move none. A feller knows what they're goin' to do. But there's others too that moves around a bit. There goes Virginia!"

A roaring meteor flamed through space leaving a golden trail down the sky.

"Now you might think Virginia's gone, but she ain't! No, sir! I've watched a good many go but they all come back. The good Lord never yit done a wasteful thing. He's just changin' things a little bit in His Own way. She 'll come back. What say?"

Ralph rose hastily and tramped out among the sage-brush.

IN TWO days later they reached the post and the worried and alarmed garrison turned out *en masse* to welcome them. To all except the gray-headed Sergeant Ames it was a day of rejoicing.

It was in the nature of things that every man of that garrison should find his way that night to the store in Salsipuedes. Barton's absence there did not seem to be noticed except perhaps by Perkins as he called Ralph into the room behind the bar and handed him a package that he took from the safe.

"I would never have kept it, captain," he said with some embarassment in his voice. "Jerry wouldn't never have thought of keepin' it either, captain, if he hadn't been fair blinded with hate fer you. He was so derned mad that day that he couldn't see straight."

Suddenly Ralph Mason knew that he too had not seen straight. Four years of blinding hate had as old Yavapai said "put a bandage over his eyes." But now he knew. He thrust the package into his pocket and edged into the crowded bar-room. His men were all there, Fenton, Lee, Duryea. All were there ——

"Sykes—Duryea—Lee. All you Galvanized men. I want to see you in a minute. Don't leave till I come back. I've got to go somewhere a few minutes."

He almost ran to Fort Critten where he found Captain Burt pacing up and down his little sitting-room. He welcomed Ralph warmly and listened intently to what he had to say, polishing his glasses while he listened. When Ralph fell silent Captain Burt picked up his cap.

"Come on then," was all he said as they headed for the roaring bar in Salsipuedes.

"Come up. All you Galvanized men. Come up."

Ralph picked them up with his eyes and drew them to the bar. They crowded wonderingly up to him and waited. Ralph's eyes lingered long over them as they stood watching him and waiting for him to speak. How would they take what he was going to say? For four years now they had stood by him as men he believed had never stood by any leader. That must be his line.

"I've got a lot o' money that I didn't expect to get." His voice sounded far-away, impersonal, outside himself.

"And I've been considerin' what to do with it. There 's all kinds of land over in California—Spanish ranches, you know, that are fairly well-stocked and for sale cheap. I'm goin' to buy one of 'em. As big a place as I can get, and I want you fellows to continue to stand with me in peace as you all did in war."

He stopped for a second and Yavapai, standing behind the crowd, nodded his head contentedly.

"But—" Barr spoke—"But captain, that money came to you from the sale of your home place. We can't live on that."

Ralph reached out a grimy hand and seized Duryea by the neck.

"That night when you took me out of the guard-house—remember that night? What was the motto of the Three Guardsmen?"

"'One for all; all for one,'" quoth Duryea. His voice sounded solemn.

"That stands! One for all! All for one! I don't know what the pay'll be on the ranch. We'll just whack up the profits, and we'll make it a paying proposition. Only one thing—We stick together. Is that clear? All eight of us from this time forward as it has been in the past. Is that clear?"

It was very clear. So, too, was their approval.

"There's just one thing more. They've been havin' a lot of trouble out on some of those ranches by importin' greasers to work. I'd rather not have any foreigners on the place at all. If that suits you all ——"

"Just us Americans," said Barr quickly with a nod of approval.

Ralph took the word as a blooded horse takes the bit.

"That's exactly what I mean. You said it, Barr. Only Americans are to be on that ranch. Suit you? All right. I asked Captain Burt to come down here to administer the oath of allegiance to us all. That'll make us all Americans again. I'll take it first. Come up all seven of you. Lee! What Marse Robert can do, you can do? Come up I say and stand by your captain."

For just one moment they milled about in the bar uncertainly, but Duryea settled it.

"——" he said shortly. "The Government ain't a Yankee government anyways. My people made it while the Puritans were coolin' their heels in Holland tryin' to get a place to hold a prayer-meetin'. It's more my government than it is theirs. It's my government and I've only just realized it."

He filled his tin cup and burst into a shout of laughter.

"Anyway didn't we make 'em fight like —— to show how much they liked the old Government? Come on boys, we ain't goin' back on the captain now."

In five minutes it was done and Yavapai's voice lifted high above the scuffle.

"Come on up here to the bar you —— Americans!"

Grinning broadly through his gray beard, he smote Lee between the shoulders.

"Come up here you —— Americans, an' take your p'ison! You're men of fortune now! Land in California an' horses and' rifles; good weather and an open trail. Good Lord! if I was only young again! Listen to Barr, will you?"

Barr clutching the counter with one hand poured a libation to the gods: shouting:

"A great an' glorious thing it is
When in the clutch o' circumstance
To know that time an' place are his,
To ——

"To pin the hole up in his pants," quoth Lee. "Somebody give me a pin."

He strove to repair his more obvious rents.

"Shut up, you heathen! You shook the knees of the gods an' spilled my liquor! We'll go to San Francisco, Lee, an' see the ships sail out and in. We'll sleep in a bed. We'll see men who shave. Think o' that, Lee! We'll have cold drinks—and we'll see girls. Girls! Girls! Think o' that Lee. You may get married. Never can tell. It's liable to happen to most anybody."

"You go to ——. Get married yourself and see how you like it. Come on. The captain's goin' back to camp. I know a song, too."

No one but Yavapai paid any attention to him as at the rear of that weaving column heading campward under the stars he chanted:

"I do not need a bride,
For the world is very wide
An' I lay this flatterin' unction to my soul—Oh! Ho!
Why should I love one?
When with pony, pack an' gun,
I've got General Admission to the Whole Darned Show!'"

"Son—" Yavapai Steve laid a heavy hand on Ralph's shoulder forcing him to a halt and looked squarely into his friend's unflinching eyes—"Son, you may have done some darned good work in your past life. I ain't questionin' it. I hope you have. But what you've done here tonight is the best piece of work you ever done. Good night, son! Sleep good! You ought to!"

Yavapai Steve walked slowly away in the dusk.

A COOL PASSAGE

by H. Campbell Buckley

NIGHT in the Red Sea!

No sound, save the distant throb of the ship's engines and the gurgle of the propeller-race as the liner drives swiftly through the water, smooth to oiliness.

The passengers sleep, or try to sleep, for it is hot, terribly and oppressively hot. Most are on deck, and grumbling is heard, like the thin wail of a restless child piercing the stillness. All day long the very pitch has boiled in the deck-seams. And though it is now long hours since sundown, a sizzling heat, scorching like the blast from a furnace, is borne on the night wind—a wind charged with particles of red-hot, skin-searing sand.

Night brings no relief in the Red Sea.

The heat, unbearable on deck, is fiercer yet in the bowels of the ship. In engine-room and stokehold the thermometer shows one hundred and forty odd degrees. The Lascar firemen toil endlessly to keep steam on the liner's giant boilers. From time to time, the weaker ones steal into the coal-bunkers for a momentary respite. They are driven out with kicks and curses by their *tindel*, a powerful, inhuman brute whom the heat seems not to affect. Suddenly, with a wild cry a man dashes up the stokehold ladder.

The heat has driven him mad.

The others know that he will plunge overboard. But they make no attempt to prevent him. It is *Kismet!*

The watch-officer on the bridge makes a sustained though weary effort to keep moving. The heat stifles him. The least exertion saturates his drills still more, already clammy with sweat. He must keep moving, at any cost. To stand still is to fall asleep. The tantalizing thought of an impossible iced drink sends him, licking parched lips, to the water *chattee*, hanging nearby. But the draught sickens him; the very water is warm.

A sudden outcry from the after-deck, and the watch-keeper is alert on the instant. Comes a voice, distant, thin, like the cry of a gull— "Man over-bo-ard!"

A spring, and a life-buoy with its calcium flare hurtles down into the sea, and as the engines are rung to "stop," a hoarse order to the quartermaster sends the helm spinning hard-a-starboard; another instant, and the engines are going "full astern."

The ship loses headway, comes around on her helm, and the captain, who has heard the jangle of the telegraph and is out "on the jump," barks a few crisp orders. He is a quaint figure in pajamas and uniform cap, but his voice is obeyed on the run.

"Away port-quarter-boat!"

The emergency boat drops to the rail with a rattling of sheaves, pauses an instant while its well-drilled crew leap to their stations, then continues its descent to the water. The falls are unhooked as if by magic; the oars shipped.

"Pull port! Back starboard! Give way all!"

The rescuers are heading down the silver path of shimmering sea to where the bobbing light of the calcium flare shows pale in the moon's brilliance.

"Give way men! Bend your backs! Full o' sharks 'round here!" urges the mate at the tiller.

The perspiring oarsmen respond with a spurt.

Presently the officer, half standing, eyes glued on the buoy ahead, makes out near it a black object in the water—a man swimming for dear life.

"One o' th' firemen," mumbles a sailor, as the boat ranges alongside and a dripping, exhausted specimen of humanity is hauled over the gunwale.

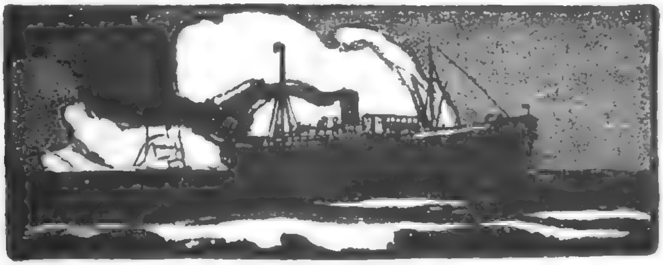
The officer, speaking Lascari *bat* asks the native how he got overboard, but the man is too terrified to answer, so with a grunt the mate—who is a Scotchman, and economical—proceeds to pick up the lifebuoy.

The near tragedy has its humorous side. Aboard the steamer most of the passengers, wide awake now and agog with excitement, are lining the rails. They are in various stages of undress. One opportunist, a lady of uncertain age and dubious attractions, seizes the chance to subside in a graceful swoon and a pink kimono into the arms of a fellow-traveler.

The boat is hoisted. The captain gets the ship under weigh and on her course again. The would-be suicide is half-led, half-dragged by the fireman *serang* to the bridge to be interrogated. The captain is irritable. The ship has been delayed. Impatiently he listens to the *serang's* explanation.

"Too hot down below?" he echoes in a bellowing voice. Too *hot?* Coolest —— passage I've ever *had!* Take him away, *serang*. Take him down below again. Get a good bamboo, and knock seven bells out of him!"

The *serang* salaams. And the captain, bending forward, shakes a shower of perspiration from his forehead.



BLOW-GUNS

by Gordon MacCreagh

WHAT a lot of misapprehension there is about blow-guns! People looking at my specimens frequently remark—

"My, I never knew they were that long!"

And they add that they have read a tale somewhere[*] which gave them the impression that blow-guns were little tubes as big as pea-shooters which could be concealed about the person and through which one shot thorns.

Pea-shooters, yes. But giants of the tribe, ten feet long and weighing more than a modern rifle.

Blow-guns are very widely distributed, and there is very little variety in the pattern—which is no proof at all of ancient intercontinental communication. Rather of the simple fact that intelligences in a similar state of evolution, faced with similar conditions, will develop similar ideas.

Perhaps the most elaborate form of blow-gun is that made by the Indians of the Amazonas and Guianas. This is quite a weapon. It consists of an inner tube fashioned from a certain palm which grows very thin and straight. The pithy center and the knots are knocked out with a hardwood stick, and the bore, about one-half inch in diameter, is ground to a machine finish with rough leaf which cuts like sand-paper.

This barrel is then enclosed for protection in an outer casing made of two lengths of hardwood grooved down the center, glued together and bound with ornamental cane and bead work. A lip-piece of carved wood is carefully fitted, and sights are added—actual front and rear sights, the latter open, the lower-jaw and canine teeth of some small jungle cat—and the weapon is then a completed *zarabatan*, a field-piece of some eight to ten or twelve feet in length, according to the available length of the original inner tube.

A good gun takes about a month to make and is as prized a possession as an imported rifle.

Ranking close to the *zarabatan*, I should say, is the *samutuna* of the Sakai tribes of Perak and Selangor of the Malay Peninsula. This, too, is an elaborate affair consisting of an inner tube as well as an outer casing; though the Sakai are fortunate in having a rare indigenous bamboo which grows some times to as much as fifteen feet in length without a knot.

Next might rank the *sumpitan* of the Land Dyaks of Borneo, a single tube laboriously hollowed out of ironwood, some eight feet in length. Finally the crude single-tube guns of the Igorotes and the Andaman Islanders, four or five feet long—though some of the Mindanao guns are very ornamental. Quite some pea-shooters, though, even at a miserable four feet.

Arrows or darts offer less scope for variety. Usually just a thin sliver of tough palm or a mid-rib of palm-leaf tufted with tree-cotton, about eight inches in length. In the Guianas I have seen an occasional dart furnished with thin bark fiber glued spirally along the shaft to impart a rotary motion. Not so far from the conception of a rifle, what? I have never seen thorn of any sort used.

All darts of all these peoples are carried in little sheaths containing poison; and I am rather inclined to believe that investigation would prove all the poisons to be some form of strychnin.

Up to about a hundred and twenty feet an average *zarabatanara* is pretty sure of game as small as birds or monkeys. Conversely to firearms, the larger the game, the longer the range may be; for all that they care about is the size of the target to be hit. Strength and vitality go for nothing. Tapir, they claim, they can bag at seventy yards. Which is more than a modern shotgun is good for.

---

[*] "The Sign of the Four," by Conan Doyle.

THE MAN WHO SPOKE WITH THE WIND*

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Rivals of the Reef," "Nemesis," etc.

THE motto of the *Musketeers*—"All for One and One for All"—is a slogan to be strictly observed where white men tread the outposts of civilization. Where one is weak, those who follow are judged by his standard; he who falters imperils the rest, lowers the prestige of the conquering race. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the Black Islands, the far-flung groups of Melanesia, where the dark foliage of the bush lies somber beneath the brightest sun, as if to warn the intruder of the perils of the place, of the tribesmen that steal like super-apes along the narrow, gloomy trails, where skulls swing in the breeze or stand in crumbling piles as trophies of bloody raids and ghastly feastings.

Tom Picker was not the man to run a station on such a beach as the landing at Ngoba, on Malaita, in the savage Solomons, trading canned salmon, stick tobacco and cotton prints for copra, turtle-shell and *bêche-de-mer*. He was a thin, undersized and indecisive person, with an Adam's apple jerking nervously in his scrawny throat, pale eyes of faded, watery blue peering through sandy lashes, half-bald, dyspeptic, irritable, untidy and inefficient.

There was a village at Ngoba, beachmen driven from the bush by the fiercer hill tribes, reputed friendly, as Solomon Islanders go, kept in hand by the former incumbent, but a treacherous lot with childish mentalities veering to the breeze of every passing emotion; conscious only of the demands of sex and stomach, regarding the white man as an instinctive enemy, eager for his wares, loath to earn them, swift to satisfy their greed whenever opportunity seemed to offer.

It took courage to land there, his goods piled about him, watching the schooner that had brought him sailing out through the reef entrance, conscious of the intent but shifty gaze of shallow eyes, of the curious crowd of stocky men, dwarfish but heightened by their frizzes of lime-bleached hair; naked save for narrow clouts, carrying spears and wicker shields; flaccid-breasted women and pot-bellied children in the background; eying the newcomer, speculating, commenting.

Picker's courage began to ooze out of him. He remembered the strict injunction he had been given, the grim tales of traders butchered because of their carelessness.

"Never turn your back on 'em."

How could he help it? There might be a score of men in the bush, planning to turn him to the semblance of a porcupine with

---

This is an Off-the-Trail story. See note at bottom of first contents page.

their shafts, to loot his stores. Only the prestige of the white man preserved him, the belief of the natives that his *mana* was greater than theirs, that, and the gun at his holster he barely knew how to use. To fire and miss was fatal, others had told him. He had to outface them—to bluff—and desperation gave him nerve enough to order the nearest to take his goods up to the store and the metal-roofed shack he was to live in, promising them tobacco in his uncertain beach-English. The willingness with which he was obeyed relieved him. His manner strengthened with his assurance.

When the work was done he gave them their sticks of "smoking" and saw them leave for their own huts grinning—not knowing that he had given them twice as much as any other trader, that they were already regarding the new white man as easy, looking forward to further encroachments on his inexperience.

Picker had been a ship's chandler in Sydney. He knew his business but he was over-keen to make money, unpopular with the failing trade. The trader from Ngoba had come home during the rainy season, sick of his solitude, shaken with island fever, bothered with yaws, ready to turn his vacation into a quittance at Picker's offer. The man had made money and Picker thought he saw his chance. The price of copra was going up. He had a chance to buy a trading-stock cheaply and the deal was not long in the consummation.

There were some germs of romance and of adventure in Picker. Vicariously he had felt the glamor of the South Seas but reality soon shattered it. The glaring sun burned and blistered him. Every scratch turned to an ulcer. Mosquitos and sandflies made his nights miserable despite netting, and he was insufferably lonely. He had been given a good deal of advice by the trader he had bought out, but he found it hard to apply most of it. Physically, he was unable to do what the other man had done; mentally, he shrank from it.

"You got to be firm," the trader told him. "They'll take advantage of you every turn. That's all they're lookin' for. There ain't no such thing as gratitude in their systems, so don't you show any. They won't savvy it only in one way, that you're a softy. An', if you're a softy you're a goner. If the Ngoba folk don't git you the bushmen will and your head'll go on show in the *kamal*. There's other white men's heads there.

"They're watching you all the time. Watch 'em back an' jump 'em first time they make a break. It'll be a little break at the start, to test you out, but jump 'em hard. If you think you can't handle 'em with your fists, use your guns, wallop 'em over the crust an', if you have to shoot, shoot straight. You're the law at Ngoba. You won't be bothered by the folks over at Gizu. They know what a man's up against an' they'll wink the other eye.

"Mebbe Kanakas have got reason but they don't use it. You got to be one jump ahead of 'em. They'll be chummy for six months an' crack your spine where it jines the neck if they think they can get away with it an' whatever tempts 'em. Herd 'em. Show 'em you're boss. Don't monkey with their women. Get one of your own from some other village an' pay for her. "She's the only one you let in your shack. Savvy? Your house is *tapu*. If they come on the verandy chase 'em off—kick 'em off. They'll be expectin' it.

"There's been hundreds of years when the main idea was, when they saw a stranger who had anything that looked good to them, to stick him in the back. When they see your goods an' you give 'em a chance, it takes more than missionaries or gunboats to hold 'em back. They don't look ahead that fur. They're like the boy who can't help chucking a rock at a cat. It comes natural."

"Chalk this up in your shack—I'M THE BOSS—and never forgit it or let them forgit it."

The profitable acquisition of advice is a good deal like a white man trying to learn the Chinese language. A Chinese youngster picks up, little by little, with perfect fluency, what it takes the white man twenty years to talk at all. Without personal experience, the recipient feels like a man handed the tools of a watchmaker and told how to conduct the watchmaking business profitably without having served an apprenticeship to the trade.

That was the way it seemed to Picker the first days and the first nights, lying awake and wondering when the room might be filled with leaping, stabbing savages, who would hack off his head and loot the store. It would be easy enough for them to do it and blame it on the bushmen.

Time familiarized him with them as it

does the cage-sweeper with the man-eaters in a menagerie. They seemed nothing more than a lot of grown-up, mischievous children. They came to him with their quarrels and their ailments quite naturally and he gave out judgment and simple medicine with apparently eminently satisfactory results. They had no wizard of their own and Picker, who was far from a fool, took pains to show them a few simple tricks that made a magician out of him in their eyes.

They drew stores in advance against the time when they would make delivery of nuts or give labor in splitting them and drying the copra, and his list of accounts grew as his stock gradually diminished. The season came on and he found his first difficulty in getting them to even the score. They got sulky when he refused to issue an extravagant order to a lazy customer, still on the wrong side of the ledger. But it never came to an open rupture though there were days when they were sullen and looked at him with eyes that were speculative and gave Picker goose-flesh.

Other traders would have lighted into them, he supposed, emphasizing the lecture with kicks and blows, but Picker shuddered at the fear of reprisal. He had too vivid an imagination. On the way to Ngoba he had been fed up on stories that the skipper and mate of the schooner swore were true, tales of vessels wrecked on a reef and attacked by canoes, of bloody scuppers and beheaded trunks, of butchering and ovens, of bleaching skulls—tales illustrated by the grim marks of tomahawks and bullets in the timbers of the schooner itself.

There was Harris, the trader, who had lived in amity with the tribes for seven years until he inadvertently gave out some canned salmon that contained ptomaines. He was red-haired, proud of his red beard—and the belt and dancing kirtle of the wizard of the bush-folk back of his station were found to be ornamented with Harris' hirsute glory. They had hanged the wizard and shelled the bush-village, but that hadn't done Harris any good.

Luck got Picker through the season more than judgment. There were many hours when time hung heavy on his hands and he longed for the company of another white man, or of even a dog. It was then that he first thought seriously of the advice to get a woman. As he had been advised, some of the young girls were not bad-looking. But, though he knew it was the usual thing, the thought lacked immediate appeal to him.

An alliance had been suggested more than once, prospective house-keepers pointed out, terms hinted at, but Picker was canny enough to see that a girl selected from his own village would mean the upkeep of all her immediate relatives.

THERE was always a breeze at Ngoba during his first weeks and he conceived the idea of making a kite. As a boy he had been an adept both at building and flying. Materials were at hand, bamboo and cotton, glue and string, and he got to work.

The bare job completed, he elaborated, painting a face on either side in crude but effective design, using colored remnants for the final tuft to the tail that he constructed out of folded paper strips.

The day he flew it was a red-letter one in Ngoba. It established the reputation of Picker on a foundation that looked as if it might withstand all disaster. And, when he sent "messengers" fluttering up the taut line, he was believed to have established connection with the gods.

Picker was keen enough to take advantage of their credulity. Before he gave any decision, prescribed any medicine, he would fly one of his kites—he made several of them of varying shapes and sizes—send up a messenger inscribed with scrawled gibberish and listen at the humming line for answer.

He went swimming in the lagoon, floated on his back and let a kite tow him. It all proved his *mana*, secured the change of his native name. The first title, meaning "The Little White Man" and possessing in native idiom a double and not complimentary intent, was changed to one meaning "White One Who Speaks With The Wind."

Though Picker was not fully conscious of it, his kites insured him a fairly profitable season and cargoes that rather surprized the skippers that called to collect and pay for them in cash and trade-goods.

The captain who had brought him to Ngoba had prophesied disaster for Picker and retracted handsomely. He chummed with Picker during his call and lading, and promised to make him special delivery of certain things that Picker needed.

"You'll need the readin' matter an' the

gin durin' the rainy season," he told him. "It's fair —— while she lasts, I'm tellin' ye. What you want most is a likely gal, Picker. Better let me pick you out a woman. I saw one over to Titabu that's a peach—not much darker than a ripe peach at that. I got a snap-shot of her aboard. I'll show it to you. Darned if I don't leave it with you. You'll go nuts if you live here alone."

Picker laughed at him though he gazed with some interest at the print of a laughing girl with a wreath of ginger flowers round her neck, her long hair making a cape for her, kilted in bizarre patterned trade-cloth that emphasized the symmetry of her young grace. Her name was Kiari, the skipper told him, and Picker stuck the picture up on the wall.

"Better let me make the bargain for you with her father," urged the captain. "I'll bring her back with me when I bring your stuff."

But he got no commission and, when he returned for the last trip of the season, there was no Kiari aboard. But there was another snap-shot taken on board the schooner and Picker got another print.

"I told her about you," said the skipper. "She's crazy to come. You've got quite a reputation in the group, Picker. They call you 'The Man Who Talks With The Wind,' and any girl 'ud be tickled to come to Ngoba.

"You'll change your mind before the rains are over," he added as Picker shook his head. "You don't know what you're up against. Then you run over in your launch to Titabu and bring her back. Father's name is Matinui. Twenty-fathom of cloth, half a bale of 'baccy, couple of cases of salmon, fifty pound of dog-biscuit, half a dozen bottles of squareface—and you'll have the prettiest kid in the group. If you knew how to handle a schooner, derned if I w'udn't swap places with you and git her for myself. Only—" and he spoke seriously—"I ain't got the reputation you have."

The skipper left behind him the gin, magazines, books, tinned-goods, tinned-tobacco for Picker's own use, kerosene for lamps and gasoline for the launch. Picker had found that the offer of a cheap kerosene lamp with a cheap porcelain shade, painted with gaudy flowers, was a prize incentive to the natives in his dealings with them. Those who lived in houses that had a lamp, kept for show as well as illumination, looked down on those who had been unable to earn one. He was shrewd enough not to place any of them on sale. All in all he watched the final departure of the schooner—the last visiting vessel for months—with a feeling that he had largely solved his problems, that he was on the road to success.

Then the rains came. In gusty torrents, in cascading floods that made the earth smoke and set up a blue fog that hid the dripping, melancholy palms, the torn banana banners, and stripped the over-ripened fruit from the trees. It thudded dully on the dirt and battered the metal roof of his living-shack with a perpetual bombardment that banished sleep and thought until he began to get used to it, as a man will get used to living next to a stamp-mill or a boiler-factory and, by that time, it began to get on his nerves.

Everything had mold upon it. Food, books, clothes, tobacco. His kites peeled apart.

His vista was limited to a glimpse of the spouting lagoon, sending up little gray geysers of resentment against the downpour that lanced it, and a few immediate trees and shrubs. The rest of the island was veiled by heavy mist that swirled thickly when, for an hour or two, the rain ceased, only to come charging down again, hour after hour, day and night.

In those brief pauses the air steamed and reeked with the stink of decay, of rotting fruits and vegetation. The sun vanished utterly with the moon, the stars, the very sky. He could hear the sound of booming breakers on the reef, but he never saw the sea. He was left alone, to cook, to pass the dragging day that was always twilight, to smoke, to drink, to light a lamp and read over and over the stories he knew by heart, to put aside the damp netting and crawl into the musty, unmade bed, to go unshaved, to hate the look of himself in the murky glass, to catch himself talking aloud, to get sodden with liquor to match a sodden world and wake again to another horrible day.

The battery on the roof—like shot falling—began after a while to seem like shot falling on exposed nerves. He was jumpy from loneliness, from solo debauches. He began to call himself a poor unfortunate in his thought and then apostrophized himself in loud soliloquy.

Once he heard himself saying—as if his soul had stepped aside to address his body—

"Why don't you cut your throat, you fool, and end it?"

A stay—a reprieve of a week with a sudden change of wind that tore the mist apart and let him see pale sunshine on the higher peaks, that gave him a day or two of fishing on the lagoon, a few hours of grateful babble with the natives—saved him from that.

The inevitable island fever helped though it laid him low with fits of awful shivering alternating with scalding rashes and splitting headaches. When he won through, his bones seemed brittle and pithed with pain, his mouth tasted foul, his sight was affected and he had no strength left in him.

An old woman and her granddaughter came and ministered to him with his own prescriptions of quinine and with native draughts, putting his cluttered place to rights, cooking delicious fish in *ti*-leaves, squeezing fruit-juices, bringing him young coconuts to drink.

It was quite obvious that the intent, friendly as its basis might be, was to leave the girl, comely and deft and willing enough, permanently in charge of Picker's housekeeping. And, in his weakened, grateful condition he almost succumbed.

The girl spoiled her own chances, bringing to him one day the two half-forgotten snapshots of Kiari, affecting to be jealous of her with a coquetry that was wasted, while Picker took over the pictures and kept them under his pillow, looking at them for long stretches as a sick and languid man will, remembering the skipper's catalog of her charms.

The monsoon change came soon after that with breaking weather, with sunny mornings and flashing foliage, blue waters, fresh flowers, mating birds. Picker filled the gasoline-tank of his launch, *putted* over to Titabu and came back with Kiari.

She was a beauty. Picker used to look at her and wonder how she had consented to come to him. True he gave her everything she asked for from the store but, deep within him, he felt that her lustrous eyes, her full red lips, must demand more than he could provide. He appraised himself and, summing himself up in comparison with her bubbling vitality, grew the more resolved to have and hold.

At first she had shown awe and a certain reverence for his supposed affinity with the gods, but she soon found that he was no real wizard and she played Vivien to this island Merlin, posing and dancing for him, utterly intriguing him. In her fresh, unfolding beauty, in her ways and wiles, he found her literally charming, and lived an old man's fairy tale for a fortnight.

Then the inevitable happened.

Ngoroa, the diver, Ngoroa the heart-breaker, Ngoroa the son of Tusi the chief, returned from the pearling.

SHE ARRIVED one morning at dawn in an out-rigger canoe from Gizu and he landed at Ngoba as Kiari was going for her morning swim. They saw each other first in the clean, strong light of sunrise. Their eyes met, their glances held and mingled. Youth called to youth and grace to grace. Picker, coming out with a yawn, a forlorn figure with his lean chest and his bald head, saw the two together against the sun and knew them meant for each other.

Ngoroa's skin was dark compared to Kiari's. Dark as weathered bronze with the muscles sliding about underneath it, his deep chest—the chest of an under-water man—filled proudly, the ribs showing, the lean stomach corded with muscle. His limbs were symmetrical, well-developed. His nose was aquiline, a combative, possessive nose, his eyes flashing. Still fresh in the frizz of his pompadour were the pink double-hybiscus friends had given him at Gizu when he left there at midnight.

Kiari's skin was like the petals of the soft brown orchids that blossom in the bush, soft as velvet but firm. Her bosom rose and fell as she gazed at Ngoroa and Picker, everything else was forgotten.

Ngoroa threw her a blossom and she tossed her chin at him while the flower floated in the lacey fringe of the tide. He laughed with a flash of white and perfect teeth, and walked up the beach like a young god. When the canoe had been hauled up and all its crew had followed Ngoroa, the girl stooped and retrieved the wilting hybiscus. As she rose with it in her hand she saw Picker, who had returned and was walking slowly and wearily back to his shack. Being purely natural, entirely feminine, unrestrained by any civil conventions, Kiari made a face at his bent back. The thought of living with him had become suddenly bitter, as if the taste of a ripe *vi* had changed to the bitterness of the pith of the island shaddock.

The glory of being the consort of The White Man Who Speaks With The Wind faded utterly. The privilege of having the run of the trading-store for her own meant nothing. She had but one desire—Ngoroa. She knew that he desired her also and the knowledge of it was a sweet secret.

It was not a secret long. The girl who had come with her grandmother to help nurse Picker and who still cherished certain ambitions not destined to be fulfilled, woke him from an afternoon siesta.

"Another uses your net, Pikari," she said, as he stared at her.

By this time Picker did not need beach-English. And he knew enough of native idiom to understand the inuendo of the phrase.

The girl looked at him curiously, wondering what the white wizard would do. She was not sure that she wanted him to hurt Ngoroa, who had come back with gifts for the village and who was so handsome that she had even forgiven him for forgetting who she was, for taking no notice of her. But, above all, she wanted vengeance and disgrace measured out to Kiari, who had treated her as if she was dirt, had even mocked her and her grandmother for their attempt to ensnare Picker.

Picker did not want to go, did not want evidence of what he suspected had been taking place behind his back. But this girl would spread the news in any event.

He would have to take action, to move against Ngoroa and he was afraid. Ngoroa, superbly insolent in his physical supremacy, had passed him more than once with eyes that were at once contemptuous and challenging. Picker's imagination showed him vivid pictures of what might be the result of hurt to Ngoroa.

If the diver was Kiari's lover Picker knew what he would be expected to do by the code of other island traders. To kill the man and to punish the woman, either by death or beating. If he allowed her to come back it should be only as a whipped and broken-spirited slave.

But he wanted her as she was, unblemished, wanted her as he knew he could not have her. Already he had condoned too much, looks between the two, sly absences of Kiari, indifferently well accounted for, smiles of the village.

Now he was being forced to an initiative—and he was afraid. He argued that if he killed Ngoroa the villagers might rise against him on account of the diver's popularity and his rank as son of the chief. And he knew that as a white man he should be stiff enough not to consider such a possibility, strong enough to control them, fight them, if needs be, conquer, subdue them. He was the boss. The victorious white man.

If he did not kill Ngoroa he would be despised, would lose all prestige. If he did he would still lose Kiari except as a chattel. She would hate him with every breath.

More than all was the fear that he might not be able to kill Ngoroa. The diver had a gun of his own and he had ostentatiously carried it for the last week. He must be expecting a move from the white man sooner or later. He would be on his guard. If he tried, and missed, or, if Ngoroa shot first?

It was a psychological dilemma. Life held little for him on Ngoba if he failed to wipe out this insult to his manhood. Life without Kiari was not endurable. Yet he had lost her—irrevocably. And he knew himself for a physical and mental coward. He had no right on an island where emotion reigned, where the laws were primitive, where a man was judged by his ability to take what he wanted and to keep it, man to man, weapon to weapon, strength to strength. He belonged back in civilization where he would be bolstered by the law, the police, by public opinion.

No one on Ngoba condemned either the man or the girl. They wanted each other and they had taken. Ngoroa was using the net of Pikari. The village waited to see what Pikari was going to do about it.

On the moment while he sat irresolute, shoeless, he saw his soul naked and knew it for the soul of a coward.

The native girl had turned to where a rifle was set on pegs, a holstered automatic beneath it.

"Which do you want?" she asked him. "The rifle of Ngoroa is a *Vinikasteri*" (Winchester).

Picker shuddered, shuffled over the floor and took a drink of gin. He had gone back to drinking again the last two or three days. The stuff held no kick. He shook his head.

He could not face the issue. But the liquor braced him enough to turn on his informant.

"You go about your business," he told her, with an assumption of wrath. "Leave gossip to your grandmother. I will attend to my own affairs. Go!"

He could see her respect for him passing as she gazed at him, incredulous but slowly reading him with her woman's intuition. Then she laughed, turned about, flung him a last word over her shoulder.

"Ngoroa casts the net in the palm-grove by the stream," she said, and called him by his first name—"The Little White Man." Then went out—to give the news to the village.

Picker sat with the veins swelling in his forehead as he swilled more gin. The wind of jealousy blew on the feeble fire of his spirit and roused a flickering flame. But, when he took down his rifle his hands trembled. He went out with it and passed by the village, knowing all heads craned, judgment suspended. Smothered laughter breaking out again as he went down the beach—away from the palm-grove, sneaking round and into the back of the shack.

Kiari did not come back again. Picker held his lonely shack for a day or so until he had to come out to attend the store, to look after business. Ngoroa came in boldly, rifle in the hollow of his arm, meeting the trader's blood-shot glance insolently.

"I want this—and that," he said, ordering, placing the goods in a netting bag.

They included dress goods.

"Do you take this out in copra or labor," Picker asked him, not looking at him.

"I will tell you when I make up my mind, O Little White Man."

THE village began to follow Ngoroa's lead. They ordered extravagantly and they brought in no copra, they pleaded ridiculous excuses, developed imaginary sickness, the illness of imaginary relatives, they despised him and the children made a mock of him. Once he saw two chubby, naked toddlers racing down the beach with scraps of paper tied to a string in a jest of his kites that he no longer flew. The White Man Who Speaks With The Wind was banished, forgotten.

Picker nursed his sickly jealousy until it seared his soul with hatred, with a hundred futile plans of revenge on both of them, a hundred broken resolutions. He took to solitary drinking again, bouts that roused him to shouting idle midnight boasts of what he was going to do to the pair and left him sodden and shaking.

So the skipper of the trading schooner found him—and left him—while he swiftly gathered in the situation and confirmed it in the village.

He came back to the shivering Picker and told him what he thought of him.

"You call yourself a white man," he said. "You may be white, but you're not a man. You'd better git back to Sydney. It ain't just yoreself you're hurtin' or I w'udn't bother with you. Every time a man like you that passes for white shows he's got no guts he makes it dangerous for the rest of us. Let some of 'em start an' the rest'll foller. They'll take all you got some fine night if you don't brace up, set fire to yore sheds an' shack an' go wild.

"They'll stick yore head where the ants'll clean it an' be ready to repeat the performance to the next white man who shows up. May stir up the whole island. It don't take much. Main thing that keeps 'em back is fear of a white man an' you're afraid of one of them who's taken yore gal—an' they know it. Fat chance you've got of gettin' anything out of 'em.

"You've lost the gal, you've spoiled the station, fur's you're concerned. Best thing you can do is sell out.

"You should have nipped this thing in the beginnin'. Told the gal what was goin' to happen to her if she didn't stop makin' eyes—an' done it. Same thing with Ngoroa an' then—if he got fresh—kicked him three times round the village. When he took her you ought to have shot him on the jump an' whacked his head off. Chucked it into the village. That's the only way they understand. Bells of ——, Picker, this ain't home, with a cop on the corner! Life here is red an' raw—an' you're all putty an' puff.

"The gal would have respected you if you'd handled her right. She'd have loved you if you licked her often enough an' hard enough. Now they got a brand new name for you in the village. 'Man Who Lost His Woman.' Yah! It's enough to make a sick cockroach fight an' all you do is to booze an' be sorry for yourself. I've told 'em a few things in the village'll hold 'em for a bit, but I ain't done it out of any love for you.

You make me sick to own up you belong to my tribe. I've got to offset you.

"I'll be back in a couple of weeks an' I reckon I can get you a fair offer for the place from a man who's got some stiffenin' in his spine. You'd better take it an' go back home. Sellin' soft drinks is yore line, Picker. Soft drinks an' pep'mint balls to kids on bank holidays."

He left Picker scored with the acid truths of his words, quivering with anger from which there was slowly distilled, drop by drop, a venom and the will to use it. Mixed motives spurred by shame. He'd show them whether he was a man or not. Both of them together—he'd show them. And the whole village for that matter.

Lost the girl, had he? Then no one else should have her.

He forgot his gin bottle that night though he walked up and down, talking to himself like a man in drink delirium. Close to dawn the idea came to him—complete. He went out on the verandah to smoke a pipe and chuckle at the lightening sea and sky. Some one saw him and ran back to the village with the news that Pikari had gone *pupure* * with grief.

Inside his shack he began to build a great kite, the first since the rainy season had spoiled his others. He used colored papers in the pasting and it was a bizarre and barbaric-looking thing by the time it was completed, with mouth and eyes and nose indicated in black on the patchwork background. It took him ten days before it was completed and dried. Then came the tail.

The twelfth day he strolled down the beach toward the village and met Ngoroa and Kiari face to face. Ngoroa had his arm round the girl, and he had left his rifle at home, tired of packing it against a man who would never attack. But there was something in the trader's manner, his eyes, his smile, that made him uneasy.

Picker held out his hand to Ngoroa, but he did not look at Kiari or speak to her.

"Ngoroa," he said. "I am old and you are young. Youth takes what age tried to hold. It is the way of life. I have never given you a wedding present. There is a fine lamp at the store, with a shade that is pink and blue and gold. Come up and I will give it to you."

He passed on, ignoring Ngoroa's astonishment. The whole village had heard the offer. If Ngoroa did not accept they would say he was a fool and afraid—just as they were saying that Pikari was a fool and afraid because he offered it. He had slight doubt of Ngoroa coming for the lamp. It would only be another feather in Ngoroa's cap, another trophy of the white man's submission. Ngoroa was the man who had humbled him and taken his choicest possession. Son of a chief, he had shown his might. The white men were not so powerful as they boasted. Had he not tested them?

Kiari, with a feeling she could not analyze, did not want to take the lamp, but Ngoroa laughed at her and presented himself at the store.

It was a fine lamp, brave in white metal and with a most resplendent shade, pink without, blue lined, and with gold figures on it. A magic lamp! Chimney and wick and filled with oil—complete. The hut of Ngoroa was packed late with admiring natives and Picker's ears should have been scorched with the talk that centered upon him, the Man Who Lost His Woman. But he was drinking steadily in his shack, a grim contentment on his face and in his pale-blue eyes, peering through the sandy lashes, the Adam's apple jerking up and down nervously in his scrawny throat.

THERE was a clear sky and a great wind the next morning when he flew his kite and sent the rustling messengers far up the string.

The Man Who Speaks With The Wind had materialized again. Every man, woman and child in Ngoba gathered to watch him with wonder and slowly returning awe. In the bush the wild men saw the kite tug and sway, saw the paper disks work their way up and rolled their eyes at each other. Here was magic in the making.

"He is making magic," Kiari whispered to Ngoroa. "I told you not to take the lamp."

"It is a good lamp. Only it lacks the 'water-that-burns.' I shall go to the store for a can of it before it grows dark. Magic? Can his magic make you less beautiful or me less strong? Can it take you from my arms?"

"I don't know, Ngoroa, I do not like it. Something has always happened when he talked to the wind."

"If he is talking about us he is doing it too late. He is *pupure* because he has lost you. He is an old fool. Some day there will be no more white men in the islands. Kiari."

---

* Crazed.

She let him talk big words to her because she felt the need of comfort. The sight of the soaring kite troubled her. It troubled the rest of the village. Only Ngoroa, who had never seen Pikari flying kites before, laughed at it. And there were times when laughter was a foolish thing. Every one knew that.

Picker saw their anxious groupings and smiled grimly. He would get back his old name, his old prestige by tomorrow. No longer would he be The Man Who Lost His Woman.

He gave Ngoroa some sticks of tobacco and a can of salmon when he came to the store for a can of the water-that-burns.

"I thought you would need some so I had it all ready for you," he said as he handed the gallon can over the counter, with a bit of yam stuck on the sharp nozzle. "Keep it always filled full, Ngoroa. It will do its work better."

Ngoroa swaggered home. The sun set. Picker sat on his veranda, a pipe filled with tobacco between his lips—unlighted. His pale-blue eyes blinked occasionally, the Adam's apple bobbed up and down like a float when a fish nibbles at the bait.

Darkness fell—swiftly. Fires for cooking showed. Lights in the grass houses—torches of coco-palm, oil-nuts on a fiber string—lamps!

THERE was a sudden flare, a shriek, a yell, the swift, mounting roar of flames that devoured the dry walls and thatch of a house on the edge of the village; the tumult of shouting natives. The ruddy fire flung the shadow of Picker against the wall of his shack. He had lighted his pipe.

The skipper of the schooner looked at him curiously three days later when he presented the offer of the man who wanted to buy the station. He had wondered a little at the promptness of Picker's acceptance.

"Had a notion you might turn it down," he said. "I hear you've been kite-flyin' again. They've given you back yore old name in the village."

The pale-blue eyes shone like ice when the sun hits it. Picker nodded.

"Mebbe. But you were right, skipper. This is no place for me. I'm goin' home—to Sydney."

"Ah! Got tired of the place? Well——"

The pause was more eloquent than spoken words, there was something that resembled respect in the skipper's attitude to the other, but it was a respect that lacked friendliness. He looked in the bottom of his glass, swishing the half-lime in the Hollands hesitantly before he spoke again.

"Hear Ngoroa and Kiari got killed."

"Yes," said Picker nonchalantly. "Upset a lamp, I reckon."

"So I heard. So—I—heard. Want to put that acceptance in writing, Picker? Good! I'll be back with the new owner and the money inside of six weeks."

Thus Pikari left Ngoba.

To the people of the village The Man Who Spoke With The Wind, and brought down a swift and terrible death upon the man and woman who had wronged him, is still the mightiest of wizards—and will be until they have learned to distinguish between the flash-points of kerosene and gasoline.

OUT OF THE EAST

by Georges Surdez

Author of "West of Chad," "The Ladders of Death," etc.

CHRISTMAS EVE on the West African Coast.

A strange Christmastide, with the thermometer hovering around one hundred and ten, and half-naked boys serving cool drinks to the five white men gathered around the table in sweat-soaked ducks. Contrasted with the parching night outside, the spacious veranda of Kingsley and Company's bungalow was cool within the white cement arches. The pounding surf on the near-by beach sounded like thunder, at intervals, and the wind that blew intermittently from the Gulf, brought in drops of flying spray.

White skins form a strong bond in a black land. Of the five men present, not two had been born in the same country. Three continents were represented. Dhell, the host, agent for Kingsley in Grand Lahou, was a slim Englishman, and made much of a near kinship to titled land owners. Warner, an American, was tall, hard, with broad shoulders and capable fists. Gallows, who redeemed his sinister name by a jovial ruddy face, was an Australian. Six feet three, built on gigantic lines, he had the appearance of an overgrown child. Sternosh, an obese young Swiss, and a bad poker player, smoked ill-smelling cigars with a straw tube, and said little. Dhell and the Swiss were friends because their daily business brought them together on the beach when the ships were in for produce. Warner and Gallows were partners in a timber venture, and also friends of Dhell.

The fifth man, a swarthy lean-cheeked Frenchman, forest inspector for the Government, was the oldest of the party, self-assured from his height of thirty-three years. Louvet was a person to be catered to by timber cutters, as he could inflict fines on the slightest provocation. Passing him on the Bandama River, while floating down to Grand Lahou to spend Christmas, the two timber cutters had invited him to carouse with them over the holidays.

Though different in habits and nationality, these five were as brothers when united by the strongest of cement, good whisky from one bottle. Louvet, at first rather diffident because of his halting English, became loquacious after the fifth drink, as if the mellow liquid had rounded out the harshness of his pronunciation. After the customary round of poker, which Warner, as usual, won without apparent effort, the cards were discarded by unspoken agreement, and the conversation turned to personal experiences.

Story piled upon story.

Under the lulling inspiration of the drinks, unbelievable tales were unfolded. Gallows, for all his apparent simplicity, launched on a complicated narration of a pearl-fishing expedition in the South Seas, which Warner capped by a jaguar hunt in Central America, the jaguar, increasing in size at every description, reached twelve feet from nose to tip of tail before he was satisfactorily shot, skinned and forgotten. Sternosh, the Swiss, whose comprehension of colloquial English was limited, amused himself with subdued yodling, down deep in his throat, staring with sleepy eyes at the ceiling, a rather effective accompaniment to the drone of voices. Dhell had nothing more interesting than the probability of becoming a viscount.

Taking advantage of a lull, Louvet coughed, straightened up.

"That's all very well," he said. "But I—I have hunted the *Fen Chou!*"

"The *Fen Chou?*" questioned Warner. "What's that?"

"Something I hunted on a Christmas night."

"Uh, where?"

"In Indo-China, to be more precise, in the Tongking."

"That's a long way off," asserted Warner.

"As far off as your jaguar," retorted Louvet.

The others laughed. Sternosh, who had not followed the conversation, proved polite, and laughed louder than any.

"Well, tell us," Dhell invited.

"TEN years ago, I was still in the Army," Louvet began. "And I was sent to Indo-China. I stayed in Hanoi for some time and then was detailed to Tuyan Quan, in the north. From Tuyan Quan I was assigned to a little outpost near the Chinese border. The Black Flags, Chinese border bandits, were supposed to have been wiped out years before. But we of the Higher Tongking knew better. The outpost was in reality a little fort. A wooden palisade eight feet high enclosed the buildings. I was a lieutenant then. With me were twelve Tirailleurs Tonkinois, little fellows, ivory-yellow in color, slim and graceful as women, and, like women, wearing a *chignon* beneath their wide conical hats. You think you have rain in this colony. It's nothing to what falls in the High Tongking. The rain drips and drips endlessly, and even with the sun out, the fields are ten feet high in fog, a fog that wets through the clothing and makes one think he has fallen in a pool."

Louvet took a drink, rubbed the back of his hand against his bearded lips, and went on:

"The Black Flags had made progress since the first occupation of the country. They fired at us with perfectly good Winchesters. Twice my helmet was punctured. The villages I was supposed to protect were raided. Finally I met the bunch, hovering around our fort in an open space, killed off twenty or thirty and caught the rest. They knelt right there on the spot and one of my men sliced off their heads. We would have paid with our heads if they had won out."

"In the South Seas—" interrupted Gallows.

"It's his turn," chided Warner. "Have you forgotten about the *Fen Chou?*"

"After that things were quiet," Louvet went on. "I had time to do a little hunting. There were plenty of tigers, and many buck. I wandered through the bush with one guide and shot all day long. Without the bandits, the place was ideal. The population of the villages considered me as Napoleon plus, after my brief and successful campaign. Whenever a leopard or tiger took it into his head to kidnap a woman or child for gastronomical purposes, I was called upon. And I went out with my military rifle. For big game shooting as well as war, give me a Lebel rifle, with the nose of the bullet criss-crossed with a knife."

Louvet drew a deep breath.

"As time went on the tigers became scarce. Peace reigned. Then I noticed a worried look on the faces of my people, though they said nothing. I questioned, but without result. This went on for several weeks, until I was so nervous I jumped at the slightest noise. Sheer terror was on the soldiers and villagers. I did not, at the time speak the language of the natives, but one word was repeated so often that I could not fail to remember it. All the conversations were studded with '*Fen Chou*,' '*Fen Chou.*' I heard my cook mention it to my houseboy, my Tirailleurs to the villagers. One morning, as I went on a tour of inspection to the nearest village, I stumbled into a mob gathered around some object. I pushed my way through. There was the body of a man, terribly mangled about the throat and chest."

"I immediately surmised a tiger. But when I said this, the Tirailleur beside me said—

"'See, lieutenant, there are no claw marks!'

"It was a fact. The wounds seemed to have been caused by teeth, enormous long teeth.

"'That's *Fen Chou,*' said my guide.

"'*Fen Chou*—what is this *Fen Chou?* I demanded.

"'The beast that kills the people.'"

"'Have others been killed beside this man?' I asked.

"'Yes.'

"'Well!' I said. 'Why was I not told?'

"'Because if you saw the *Fen Chou* you would die,' the native answered. 'No man can kill a *Fen Chou.*'

"'I don't care what the *Fen Chou* is,' I replied. 'If I fire at him with this, he will die. What sort of animal is he?'"

The Tirailleur, who had been in Cambodgia and Siam and had seen elephants replied:

"'Bigger than the long-nosed elephant. He looks like a rat. He does not kill for food, but for pleasure. He is not as other animals. He can never be killed.'

"I asked my informer if he had ever seen a *Fen Chou.*

"'All who see him, he kills' he said. 'We judge him by old stories and the marks he leaves.'"

"Did you see any tracks?" Warner put in.

"Yes. The marks were those of a prodigious rat. But, a short distance off, they disappeared. From the size of the footprint the beast must have been twelve feet long and six high at the shoulder. An experienced man can judge by small indications, you know."

"Yes," agreed Gallows. "I've seen you track a leopard."

Even Sternosh had become interested. Dhell pressed the lever and refilled his glass from the syphon.

"And—" questioned Warner.

"For many nights after that, I roamed the jungle. I couldn't see the *Fen Chou,* though more people were mangled. My soldiers shook their heads. My guide, who was usually dependable, abandoned me once near a drinking place in an arroyo, when a huge bulk crashed through the reeds. I shot, and found only a large buck. And the next morning the *Fen Chou* had added another victim to the list. It was my guide, who never regained the fort. I found him, almost within earshot of the palisade, his heart still pulsating in his mangled chest. But he couldn't talk, and died within five minutes. Then, for the first time, sheer fear—absolute, animal fear, took hold of me. I stopped going out nights, I locked my door, slept with a rifle handy. The Thing had seemed to challenge me."

The Frenchman's hands shook as he mopped his forehead. He appeared to re-live the terror of that far-off night.

"Two months went by. Then, whipped by a feeling of shame, for I was the only white man in the vicinity and white men were supposed to give the example of courage, I tremblingly set out alone. I made out several letters to be sent off should I fail to return. The date proved to be December twenty-fifth. It will be ten years ago tomorrow."

"If you weren't here," said Gallows with mock sympathy, "I'd weep for you."

"Laugh all you wish," retorted Louvet. "You, too, would have trembled. I went to the waiting place by the arroyo, and waited. Waited long. There was no moon, only a thin light from the stars that seemed as damp as the grass I crouched on."

"Minutes dragged by. Far off a tiger howled. I knew that if the *Fen Chou* was as close as I felt he was, even the tiger would keep his distance, for all animals feared the beast, even as men. It was perhaps midnight when I heard a slight noise across the arroyo. I became cold all over, but I pointed my rifle toward the spot. The reeds parted suddenly, and a black mass with shining eyes appeared.

"My heart stopped still. I knew it was the Thing, and that the Thing knew it was I. At first I couldn't move. Then, pointing between the eyes, I fired. I fired eight shots as quickly as I could. There was a crash and a rat-like scream. Then silence The eyes had disappeared.

"How long I waited, I don't know, but with the first streak of dawn, I made for the fort. I didn't know whether I had killed or not. I didn't care. I was glad it was daylight, and that I was alive. I came back at high noon, to the spot by the arroyo. Nothing there, not even blood. There were tracks showing where he had come but none to mark his going away. Again he had disappeared into thin air."

"Ah!" said Warner softly. "I half-expected to see the skin."

"The *Fen Chou* was never heard of again. But I noticed that my men and the villagers contemplated me with pity. It was a full year before I left them, bound for Hanoi with a most gorgeous fever contracted during a hunting trip. I thought it was the end and bade farewell to my sergeant. He retorted with the following cheerful information:

" 'Lieutenant, there is no chance that you will die of fever. You must die of a bullet, of many bullets. For, if you shoot an arrow toward the *Fen Chou*, you die of an arrow. If you throw a lance, you die of a lance. Therefore, lieutenant, as you shot, you must inevitably be shot.'

" 'Nonsense!' I replied.

" 'It is well-known, has been known since the world was the world,' the sergeant answered as he shook hands.

"I laughed in his beardless yellow face, as much as the fever would allow me, and started my trip back to Hanoi. And thus it was, Monsieur Warner, that I hunted the *Fen Chou* under the stars on a Christmas night."

"Beats my jaguar, all right," agreed Warner with a smile. "There's only one thing I don't believe, and that is that you, a brave soldier, should have felt fear. You might be afraid of a tiger, but a problematic animal, too weird to be believable! For my part I'd sooner be up against ten thousand fantom *Fen Chous* than a real live wildcat. Ghosts, bah! There isn't one that'll stand the bullet test."

Louvet was silent. But he smiled.

"There's no way of testing the matter," said Warner. "Because no ghost will be kind enough to pay me a visit."

"Hope not," said Louvet.

Warner rose:

"Good night, everybody. I expect a good dinner tomorrow, Dhell. Christmas, you know."

With that, the American disappeared within his room, some distance down the veranda.

"Did I offend him?" wondered Louvet.

"No," reassured Dhell. "Part of his efficiency. Never stays up long after midnight, seldom until then."

Then he added—

"Warner's really an iron-nerved man."

Louvet grinned.

"Most men are until they've been tested."

"What is the truth of that *Fen Chou?*" Sternosh asked, whose slow-working mind was still on the story.

Louvet interlocked his fingers, and went on:

"In this country there are leopard men. They cover themselves with leopard skins, tip their fingers with iron claws, wait beside the paths for youths and women and children, rob them, kill them. If the attack is witnessed from a distance, a leopard is reported. I believe now that the *Fen Chou* was something of the sort. Some one gratifying a longing to terrorize, either for private revenge or sheer murder lust. Primitive races have reasons too complex for us to fathom, haven't they?

"In my opinion, the practical joker who played *Fen Chou* around my outpost, approached his victims under his ordinary appearance, engaged them in conversation, then killed them. You know that the Indo-Chinese are deft with their hands. To make the imprint of a huge rat would not be above their capacity. When I entered into play, he attempted to frighten me by killing my guide. That night I probably shot at some bulky dummy shoved through the bushes. The explanation is simple, but I never thought of it until last year when the leopard men were discovered."

"Yes," agreed Gallows. "All the stories of so-called occult tendency usually turn out to have a very human explanation. And yet, contrary to my partner, Warner, I feel the grip of dread when anything uncanny occurs."

"He would also," Louvet stated.

"I don't know," protested the Australian. "He seems to have reptilian blood in his veins, he is so cold. I believe he'd cast his knuckles in the teeth of the huskiest ghost that ever roamed a cemetery."

"He'd be like every one else," said Louvet. "The man is not born who holds no fear on the unexplainable—I'd be willing to bet."

"I'll cover you as far as you'll go!" retorted Gallows. "If you'll find some way of frightening Warner out of his calm, I'll pay up gladly. It would be an experience worth the money."

"I'll take you up," Louvet agreed instantly. "Five hundred francs."

"Done," said Gallows. "But be careful——"

"I know," put in Sternosh ponderously. "I know——"

"Know what?" Louvet asked.

"How to frighten Mister Warner. I have read a story in a German, what you call, periodical——"

"In a magazine," Dhell helped out.

"It was about two German officers who knew anoder German officer. The anoder German officer, he was afraid of noding. He so talk at mess. Well, one night, the two German officers got dressed up as ghosts, you know, bed sheets and all. And they went into the man's room at midnight. And der oder German he fired with his gun. But, before dar, the two first, dey had taken the goot gartridges of his gun out, and replaced them with blanks. And he fired and fired, and the ghost groaned and never seemed to mind at all. The third German start to laugh and went crazy right off. And never after was he cured."

"Nonsense," said Gallows. "A man doesn't go off his bean on such slight provocation."

"Dat story so it tell," insisted Sternosh. "But it was just a story and Mr. Warner, he has a strong head."

"His mind is so arranged that nothing ever gets out of order," said Gallows. "You can go to Warner's room up-bush at six months' interval and never notice a change. Things are kept in their place. He pushes his efficiency so far even his boy has caught it. That sour-faced Atche boy of his is so precise he is inhuman."

"That's true," Dhell agreed, then turned to the Frenchman. "Does the bet stand, Louvet?"

"Surely. Tomorrow night. And if your Warner shows the slightest nervousness, I win."

"Done," Gallows agreed.

CHRISTMAS Day was torridly hot. Dhell, the perfect host, presented a dinner sufficient to kill any man in the intense heat. But West Coasters have their souls nailed to their bodies. After several portions of *foutu*, the native dish of chicken stewed in peanut oil, accompanied by the customary boiled rice and hard-boiled eggs, and canned plum-pudding, which in solidity and taste equaled the plum-puddings digested on that day in more temperate climates, all took a siesta, lying a-sprawl, faces bedewed with perspiration. Liquids, too, had been plentiful; gin and bitters served as appetizer, an interlude of many bottles of beer, and cognac taken with the coffee.

At eight o'clock, a light supper was served. All were in good spirits. Warner, even, joined in the carols bellowed in chorus. He was a heavy winner at poker and left before twelve.

"Everything set?" asked Gallows.

"Yes."

"His gun?"

"Only one cartridge in it," replied Dhell. "And that's a blank. I unloaded his automatic myself and inserted the trick shot in the barrel. He hasn't tumbled to anything wrong. I went to his room this morning while he was out, and told the boy I wanted to borrow cigarets."

"Why didn't you fill the magazine with blanks while you were about it?" Lovet wondered.

"I wasn't going to pry the bullets out of a dozen cartridges. One shot is as good as twelve for the effect on Warner."

"There seems to be three against one," Gallows said good-humoredly. "Sternosh suggested the scheme, and you, Dhell, put in your oar. But I'll win, at that."

"Maybe," said Louvet. "After all, Warner may suspect a joke. And he isn't as unnerved as I was by the multiplied tragedies. But if you wait outside, you may hear his voice shake."

"He'll laugh, that's all," Gallows dedeclared.

"Have you got my costume?" asked Louvet of Dhell.

"Yes, downstairs in the cook house."

"Put out the lights then, and let's go," said Louvet. Then he added in louder tones. "Let's pay a visit to the Club."

Noisily, the four made their way downstairs.

IN THE cook-house were gathered the serving boys whom Dhell promptly dismissed to their satisfaction. The Christian negroes of the little port were having a celebration in the native village, the echoes of which could be heard even at the distance separating the Kingsley's bungalow from the huts.

"Massa—" began Warner's boy, hanging back.

"I'll fix it up with your master," Dhell assured him. "He's gone to bed anyway and won't need you. Go on and have a good time, too. Go, make quick!"

The fellow left.

"You have to urge that black to go off and amuse himself!" remarked Gallows. "Warner certainly has trained him right."

"He's almost too dignified for the name of 'boy,'" agreed Dhell. "He's a genuine valet. But let's see the effect of the costume."

He drew out of a box a bundle of cheesecloth.

"Think Warner will be frightened by that?" asked Gallows.

"Wait!" Dhell said with a hint of pride. "Wait until you see it in the dark."

He reached for the kerosene lamp glowing in the wall-bracket and turned down the wick. The lamp sputtered and went out. There was no moon. The compound was pitch-black. The bundle in Dhell's hand glowed softly.

"What the—!" murmured Gallows.

"Phosphorus preparation," Dhell explained, as he shook the folds loose.

The garment depending from his hands assumed an elongated, elusive, faintly-luminous shape, lugubrious to behold.

"The plain white sheet has been done too much. This is a genuine 'Hamlet Ghost' with a just-from-the-grave brilliancy."

"I know wad it iss!" said Sternosh breathlessly. "And yet it makes me fright!"

Louvet laughed.

The four were gathered in the cooking shack like school-boys on a prank. Imprisoned in the absolute eventlessness of the place, anything would have amused them. Added to *ennui*, the fumes of liquor rose to their heads.

"Slip it on me," Louvet said impatiently.

Having donned the luminous envelope, he danced grotesquely on the sanded yard. His feet sank into the loose soil and he made no sound. A greenish light emanated from the shifting swaying figure. A mad laughter shook the spectators. They rocked and bent double in their effort to keep silence.

"Let's throw a fright into the blacks," suggested Gallows.

"After—when Warner's with us to enjoy the sight," replied Dhell. "He'll deserve it."

Louvet stopped, out of breath.

"How—long must—we wait?" he asked.

"Twenty minutes, at least," said Dhell, holding on his watch, glancing at the radium figures, which had doubtless inspired the phosphorescent costume.

The men sat down and smoked. The tip of Sternosh's cigar, and the three cigarets punctured the darkness, illuminating, at times, the faces, brought into ruddy relief, comically distorted. Jokes were exchanged, jokes that sent them off into restrained laughter. Primed to a high pitch by the novelty of the masquerade, a witticism that ordinarily would not have lifted a lip, now brought choking mirth.

At length Dhell spoke.

"Now," he said.

They removed their shoes, and in their stocking feet ascended the steps, pausing at every creaking sound from the old wood. They reached the veranda. The *jalousies* opposite Warner's room had been drawn down through Dhell's foresight, under pretext of sheltering that part of the building from the sun, and the darkness was more intense than in the rest of the bungalow.

It had been agreed that Louvet should be the one to play the part of ghost. The others were to listen by the open door. Any quiver in Warner's voice, the least excited action would win the bet for the Frenchman.

Dhell, Sternosh and Gallows stayed outside at their appointed station. Louvet went in, walking on top-toes. The floor made little noise under his weight.

They could hear the sleeper's heavy breathing, and the shorter aspirations of Louvet, who was far more excited than he wished to reveal. Warner grunted in his sleep, as if the heavy meal had created unpleasant dreams. They saw the vague outline of a luminous arm reach out, heard the scraping of finger-nails on the polished iron bed-frame. Their eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, they could distinguish the faint white outline of Warner's mosquito net which depended from the ceiling in a circular canopy.

The bed creaked. They heard a smothered yawn. Then nothing more. Warner's breathing was inaudible now.

With startling violence, the American's sharp voice rang out—

"Well, how long are you going to stand there?"

Louvet did not answer. He was evidently aware that complete immobility and silence were far more impressive than any sound. Dhell laid a restraining hand on Gallow's arm. Louvet should be given his full chance. Warner moved, the spring creaked loudly. They knew that the American had sat up. Then the soft drop of the feet on the floor, a fumbling.

"I've got a gun in my hand," Warner said laconically. "If this is a joke, stop now!"

His voice was hard, unemotional.

Louvet did not budge.

A shot. The watchers saw the flash streak upward. They smiled. Warner was cautious and had tested the gun on the tin roof. Evidently satisfied, he laughed.

"Gun fixed with blanks, eh?" he asked.

Following each other in a long rattle, shots streaked out.

Dhell stepped forward quickly. The others followed him. Louvet was still standing. Then, suddenly, he swayed, bent and slithered down. Warner struck a match, chuckling.

"Playing the fool to the end, I suppose," he said.

The lamp was lighted. Warner looked up, and saw the white faces of his friends. Glancing down at the Frenchman, he started. Blood was seeping through the flimsy cloth.

No one spoke.

Gallows lifted Louvet in his powerful arms, tearing aside the netting, and laid him upon the bed. With shaking fingers, Dhell opened the coat, ripped through the underwear. Louvet had received two bullets through the throat. On his chest appeared four tiny red holes, with oozing lips.

"I had only one shot in that gun," said Dhell.

But there were six holes in Louvet, who was quite dead.

THE affair was classified by the Administration as an accident. A brief inquest made clear that Warner's boy, having watched Dhell remove the cartridges, had reloaded the weapon, believing that the Englishman was borrowing the ammunition for his own use. Naturally enough, in replacing the magazine in the stock, he had neglected to empty the barrel. Warner, deceived by that first blank shot into the belief that the gun was empty or loaded with blanks, had, in a moment of pique, fired straight at the intruder.

Seated before an untouched breakfast the next morning, the four men were silent.

Sternosh's heavy brain worked at an unusual rate. It was he who pointed out—

"He died of many bullets!"

They stared at each other, dry lipped.

"He who fires an arrow at the Fen Chou, dies of an arrow. He who shoots——"

"Queer things come out of the East," remarked Dhell.

Warner broke in abruptly:

"There was nothing occult in this. A practical joke was to blame."

"And yet—" said Gallows.

Outside, on the road, a drunken black ambled by, shouting at the top of his lungs:

"Merry Christmas, massa, Merry Christmas!"

Planks on LIFE

by Bill Adams

To a Prisoner

I HAVE been meaning for many days to write to you, and day by day, something has come up to hinder me. I did not want to sit down and send you a hurried line—I wanted to write you a letter; not just a few words, as though fulfilling a forced duty, to be done with it. I have so many friends, that sometimes I am perplexed to know how best to keep up my correspondence. The world is full of puzzled and perplexed people. There are so many who long for some one who will understand them, and there is not anything on earth I like so well as trying to help some one who feels a bit bent beneath life's burden.

I packed my own little load, alone, for a good many years; thus I know how it feels when it seems that everything and every one is against one, or, almost worse, that every one is quite unconcerned as to what happens to one. Isn't it hard to feel all alone in the old world, eh? Yet, in one way of looking at things, it is really great fun; for, after all, *there is always a way out!* I don't think that there is ever a combination

---

"To a Prisoner," copyright, 1924, by Bill Adams.

of circumstances that can overpower the man who is determined to win—or, if not to win, then what is just as good, and is really the same as winning, to go down laughing at Fate. I think, myself, that this life of ours is a glorious affair, and I'm so glad to be here.

I wish I knew how you are feeling this morning. I don't know a single thing about you, do I? For aught I know you may be a brick-layer, a teacher, a milker, a plumber—or almost anything. I suspect you, however, of being a cowboy; then—

"*Ride 'em, cowboy!*"

I have no idea how the world looks where you are, or how much of it you are able to see.

Here it is a bright and frosty morning, the roofs all white, the grass cold-crinkled. For almost two months it has been very foggy—a tough Winter for working-men. They hang about the street corners, and loaf in the pool-halls, very disconsolate. You have been in this State, in this valley. You know how it looks when everything is dripping with dew, and the fog hangs all day long, and no one wants to " 'hire a good man?' "

I wonder to how many hundred farmers I have walked up with that question—

"Don't want to hire a good man, do you, mister?"

Isn't it great when they give you the cold contemptuous eye, asking you if you are a booze fighter? Or calling you a "tramp"—or, as I've often heard them say—

"I hire only Japs."

One of the toughest things a working-man has to put up with is that offensive way that so many of the employing class have of treating him as though he were totally devoid of all fine feelings. It is the sort of thing that makes men red rabid radicals, and wobblies.

It was nice though, wasn't it, to be digging in the ditch, and chucking the red dirt up knowing that the fellow who can work uphill in silence is not to be kept down by folks of that sort?

Well—let's forget them. They are in the minority, anyway. There have been many times in my life when I have been badly "up against it" for want of a job when some man replying negatively has replied so kindly that I have gone on my way not caring a whoop whether I ever got a job again. A kindly word, a smile of encouragement, go usually a great deal farther than most men realize. It takes very little sun-warmth to thaw an icicle, eh?

What'll we talk about?

It is Sunday morning, and I've just made and eaten my breakfast. The stove is warm behind me, the sun coming through my window. It is the brightest day that I have seen for a long time—and I wish that I might make it so for you. How shall I do it, when we have never met? When I haven't the slightest idea of what things you like best? I don't know anything about you, except that you are there. If I might make you see the shining world for just a little time, forgetting all your troubles, I'd be glad.

I am alone again; vacation over. My little family spoiled me while they were here, and now I hate to have to find my own knife and fork. Some men are lazy beggars, and I am of them.

Last night I went to town to see the night train go by. You know how in the little towns everybody turns to "see the train," don't you?

I lived, many years ago, in a little place farther south, where at seven each evening every man, woman and child, and most of the dogs, hurried down to the depot to "see the train come in." It was a very small train, and seldom had more than five or six passengers aboard. When it arrived the grocer was there to see it, and the butcher, and the dry-goods man, and the clerks, and the fat old dame who ran the bakery, and the phone-girl, and her beau, and the school-teacher, and nine or ten working-men, and a farmer or two from the valley. Of course the girls went down to the depot, and naturally the boys. A four-horse stage used to meet the train; the principal excitement being to see how many passengers it would take to the town hotel.

When the excitement was over, and the engineer took the train up the line there to rest till morning, when it returned to the coast, the stage rolled away in a cloud of dust, the bakery dame stood with her fat hands on her hips and talked to the milliner, and the phone-girl walked off with her "feller." The farmers whipped up their old nags and jogged away toward their farms. All the kids and dogs were bare-footed and all had a good time. On those still Summer evenings that small rail terminal was an outflung little finger-tip of quiet romance.

Last night, though, I went to the main line and watched a great engine take an overland train upon its way—eastbound.

I don't know why it is, but always, at night, when I see the train go through, something seems to rise in my throat, and often I have to turn my head away. There is something about the clanging clanking clatter of the wheels along the track, something about the fire beneath the locomotive, something in the thrust of the driving-rods, that stirs the old adventuring blood in me. I want to go—to be upon the road—*the road to anywhere!*

There is magic about the night train. I love to watch the people through the windows, wondering who they are, whither bound. Last night there was a young man, all smiles, and by him a bright gold-headed girl whose lips were laughing back to him. I guessed them to be a honeymoon pair, and I wished them luck. A little boy put his fist out of the window to wave to me, till his mother drew his arm in. The man in the baggage-car, shutting the door, as he passed, nodded to me and I took off my hat and waved to him after the door was shut. I expect that some sedate business man took me for a madman. Perhaps I am. If so, I hope I stay so; for I'd hate to be dust-dry and never sense the quivers of romance in simple things.

I watched the train fade away in the dark distance; wishing that I could wander. I am a wanderer born, and for many a year have had to live, watching the wheels roll by, and unable to follow. Yet, I think, that to a man who loves the open road, and has known somewhat of it, there will always be a faint-sensed singing, an echo in his ears of the beauty which he loves so well. He will not ever be quite a prisoner, whatever his circumstances.

Today, this morning, I am going to build a grape arbor, and tomorrow I will plant some vines.

Every day, at noon or near to noon, I stroll off to town to get my dinner: then wander about a while, watching the people, wondering what they are all so busy about. It amuses me to see the store-keepers, at their doorways, watching me, hoping I shall stop to buy of them. The high-class store-people give me the glassy eye, for I never wear store clothes—always old dirty overalls, or corduroys. I've got one good suit—at least it used to be a good one. I bought it about ten years ago from an English remittance-man. He had just returned from Chicago where he had paid fifty-two dollars for it. I offered him fifteen bucks for it, and we made the trade. It is getting rather shiny, but is still a first-rate suit after dark. I'm not very particular.

I am a stranger in this town, and have no one to talk to, so just wander about alone amusing myself. Last night in a notion store I saw an open magazine, and my name on the page, looking right at me, so to speak!

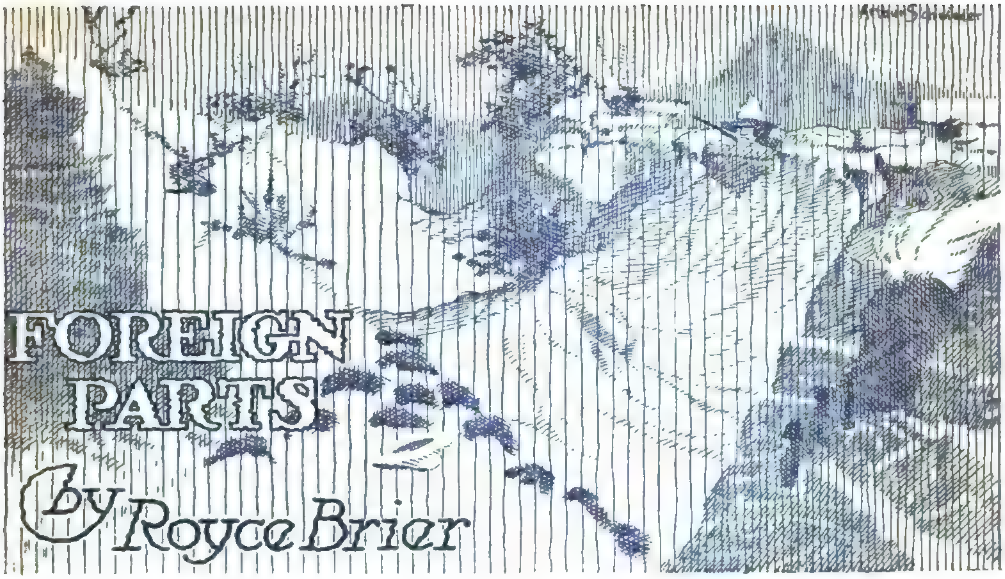
"Well," says I, "there's the only guy I know in this town, and he's crazy."

I winked at my name and came on up the street. A cop asked me what I was grinning at, and I said I'd just seen a crazy man round the corner.

"Crazy as the old ——, and he ought to be locked up."

Mister cop hurried off, round the corner, to see if he could overtake him. What do you know about that?

I must go now. Drop me a line whenever you feel like it. Sail in and say what you mean, and what's on your mind. Tell me all you feel like telling, and don't tell me what you don't feel like telling. I shall understand, anyway.



FOREIGN PARTS

by Royce Brier

Author of "Ordinary Men" and "Free Water."

TOMMY OATES was touring for touring's sake. He didn't want to get anywhere, and judging by the appearance of the country he was at the moment honoring with his none too august presence, and his curses, he was meeting with conspicuous success. He was getting nowhere.

This was Tommy's fourth flat tire down Painted Desert way. The heat melted the patches off as fast as he applied them, and his curses added fuel to the flames, after a manner of speaking. James Swinnerton's Painted Desert is exquisite from a gray plush divan in the San Francisco art galleries; from a gray lava rock, with the eyes at an altitude of the right rear fender on a Summer's afternoon, it can display a deplorable lack of soothing violets and cool midnight blues. At times as Tommy cursed and pumped, he wondered why he was here.

The reason for Tommy's touring is somewhat involved. It may be said to date back to the day he met Mrs. Oates.

Any one who has been in Chicago has seen the big green delivery-trucks bearing upon their sides tempting paintings of a fluffy angel cake, and beneath, the words—

MRS. OATES' ANGEL CAKE

The Mrs. Oates is Tommy's better seven-eighths. Time was, back in 1907, when Tommy couldn't find work, that there had been a little bake-oven in the shed at the rear of the Oates home. Today three hundred men and girls in white starched garb are engaged in feeding the angel-cake hungry of Chicago and the Middle West. It must be conceded that a score of big cars running on angel cake alone denote gray matter somewhere, and Tommy would be the last one to deny that this gray matter lay behind the beetling brows of Mrs. Thomas Oates. She was the brains and heart of the angel-cake industry in the great metropolis. Tommy was only the feet—the looker after shipping details.

Tommy was small, of excess girth, jolly, meek, with pale blue eyes, thin hair, and no thick tongue, either; a natural playboy. But Mrs. Oates always eyed him in the thorough manner in which she eyed the thermometers on the angel-cake ovens. So Tommy shrewdly chose a moment when Mrs. Oates was steeped in a contract conference with a restaurant-chain head, murmured something about a vacation after sixteen years, cashed a check for a few thousand, bought an old flivver, and started West.

He had been shooting Indians, chasing bandits and panning gold for five years, in his dreams. He came to the desert, and in the desert he was when Johnny Navatea chanced along.

"Yaki hula hicky dula," said Tommy, having already conversed with three Hopi Indians without effect. "Have a cigaret."

"Don't mind if I do," said Navatea.

"Shades of Custer!" exclaimed Tommy, astonished. "I figgered you'd know this language of movement to the hip for a cigaret, but I didn't figger you'd get the King's English."

"What you been talking to that tire isn't much English," said the Indian.

"These tubes ain't worth straight English. But say, where'd you annex the Mississippi Valley brogue, anyways?"

"I went to high school in Flagstaff, and my brother goes to the University of Chicago," said Navatea.

"Holy Stockyards!" breathed Tommy, "they sure don't stop at nothin' to educate you real Americans. I come from good ol' Chi myself."

"I've been there," returned the Indian with a flashing smile. "Wonderful—Chicago. How'd you come to leave a town like that?"

"Huh? Say, I'm visitin' foreign parts, brother. I'm a Chi gangster out raising a little merry ——! I got red blood, an 'I come out here to shed a little of it, if worse comes to worst."

Indeed, Tommy did drive by the Cook County Jail now and again on angel-cake route inspections, though this, it is feared, must constitute the sole basis for his claim to being a Chicago gangster. But Arizona is intoxicating, its vastness invites vastness, even of tongue, and Tommy may be pardoned if his talk was as sweeping and as colorful as the Painted Desert itself.

"You won't find much blood-shedding here now," said Navatea. "Where you heading for?"

"Foreign parts," repeated Tommy emphatically. "Lees Ferry or the cañons up near the San Juan if my tire-patchin' outfit holds out. But I ain't partic'lar. I don't care if I'm afoot or a-horseback or in jail, that's me! I got time, money, an' the inclination to look this country over an' see if she passes the board of censors. If she don't I'm game to try Chihuahua or the Andes River. How 'bout you? Sheep-raiser?"

The Indian nodded affirmation.

"I have a farm over beyond Keams Cañon, and I live in Walpi Village—the first mesa. My wife—have you heard of Navatea's pottery?"

"My ig'orance," said Tommy genially.

"It is the finest pottery made by any of the Hopis."

He said it with the frank, childish pride of the primitive that the glossing of civilization could not hide. He clipped the "o" in the tribal name in that strange—to the white man almost unattainable—intonation of the Hopi Indian. Tommy, who was putting his tools away, regarded the other curiously. He saw an athletic youth of medium height, lighter of skin than the Navajos he had been meeting during the day. His eyes were black, had the flash of humor, of smiles, so characteristic of the Hopi. He wore a red calico shirt, corduroy trousers, and the ever-present rabbit-skin hat of the horseman.

"Walpi is where I'm going," said Tommy. "I want to get a slant at some of these fire-eating rattlers you read about in the magazines."

"The dance is over," grinned Navatea.

He paused a moment and his gaze traveled beyond the white man.

"You might see one if you looked behind you," he finished.

Tommy turned, and his movement brought a dry scraping sound from the foot of a small piñon near by. He had to look closely to distinguish the dull olive-gray of the Western diamond. He seized a stick and started after it.

"Don't kill him," called the Indian. "He's harmless. We never bother them."

"Just as you say, brother," Tommy said, turning back to his car. "He don't look very harmless to me, but when in Rome be a Roman candle, is my motto. I never figgered I'd find a country where they got a affection for rattlers like collie puppies, but 't suits me. Old Man Trouble an' me is blood-brothers."

Tommy cranked his car and the two shook hands.

"I'll be up and look over the wife's vase factory tomorrow," Tommy said.

He drove on along the sinuous post-road in the piñon forest, down into Keams Cañon, past the rock-hewn signature of Kit Carson, past the coal outcroppings and almost to the foot of the first of the Seven Villages of Hopiland.

The amber of the mesas faded to brown in the oncoming evening, to violet, to purple, to blue, that blue which is not a color but a substance. The stars came, large, like glass prisms in the velvet darkness of a stupendous room. The yellow lights of Walpi, like port-holes of a vast ship, winked out one by one, and Tommy's fire was a lonely rose glow in the measureless blue. He stirred lazily.

"Reg'lar he-man country," he muttered, half-asleep. "Kids get rattlers in 'r Christmas stockin's——"

A POUND of candy, a carton of cigarets, earn deathless fame in Hopiland. A strange people, a childlike people, a calm people. Old, old women, twice a day fetching water to the mesa top from a spring eight-hundred feet down. Naked babies gamboling on the brink of dizzy cliffs with the indifference of little goats. Black, dancing eyes from 'dobe roofs, black, smoldering eyes from dark recesses, black, dimmed eyes from sunken faces, strange, childlike, calm. Events crowded, civilization wheeled on, the West spoke with guns, with the whirl of chance, with death—but, strange, childlike, calm.

Navatea was repairing a kerosene-lamp. He was about it lazily, and he looked up at Tommy with a grin and set the lamp down, as though welcoming an excuse to abandon even so genial a task.

No three-hundred men and girls in Mrs. Navatea's factory; only Mrs. Navatea, a young, somewhat comely, woman with a baby at her bronzed breast. She leaned over her stain pots and rapidly daubed with vermilion and sienna on the dried pottery. A cigaret from Tommy brought a smile but no cessation of labor, and from time to time she talked to her husband in a soft, fluttering tongue. She was about through staining, she wanted more clay. When she talked, Navatea acted.

Tommy was reminded of Mrs. Oates. When Mrs. Oates talked, Tommy acted.

No one could be more poignantly aware than Tommy that Navatea wanted nothing but to rest, to tinker with the kerosene-lamp. Tommy conceived a scheme.

"We are poor," Navatea said, "but she makes finer pottery every day."

"She does it all herself? You don't have to help her?"

"Hopi men hunt and farm," returned Navatea with dignity.

The scheme was one of emancipation, and no one might more fittingly advance it than Tommy.

"I want to go up to the San Juan like I said. How 'bout you being my guide."

Navatea's face lighted up.

"I'll ask her," he replied, and turning to the busy woman he loosed a river of Hopi.

He got in return a flood. Tommy felt a real, a great pity for Navatea. He would take him out in his own he-man country and make a he-man of him. Young, just a boy, Johnny Navatea. Too bad—Tommy extracted from his pocket a twenty dollar bill, holding it before the eyes of Mrs. Navatea. She regarded it a moment, but shook her head. Yet the ghost of the financial genius of that good woman, Mrs. Oates, must at this moment have established a communion, for Tommy recalled having stuffed in the watch-pocket of his trousers a twenty-dollar gold-piece.

The gold-piece did not glow more warmly in the insufferably hot room, or gleam more brightly in the amber rays of the afternoon sun, than did the Indian woman's smile. It was settled.

The following morning Mrs. Navatea was busy with the little brown rolls on the clay boards. She hardly looked up as her husband bid her an adoring good-by and kissed the baby. Tommy recalled that Mrs. Oates had been very preoccupied in conference when he mentioned his vacation.

ARIZONA morning! There is nothing so golden, nothing so blue, nothing so crystal clear. The West speaks with guns, with the whirl of chance, with death in the golden sunlight, under blue skies, in the purple translucence of the night.

The murky gray haze that clung about the shipping platform in Chicago made Tommy a small, a petty man. But bold cliffs, the measureless sweep of saffron valley floor, mesas blue with distance, beckoned him, defied him.

"I'd like to plug a hole in the sky an' watch 'er bust like a lookin' glass," he whooped, putting the leather to his pony.

"Save your bullets for prairie-dogs," said Navatea, who had trouble keeping abreast of his exuberant companion.

They rode throughout the day, from time to time passing rude huts surrounded by small corn-fields. Old men, women, children came running for cigarets, always with the flash of a smile, always with the hand up to the head-binding in a greeting.

Gray-haired old men, bow-legged, leather-faced, wearing strings of scarlet and yellow and purple beads.

"They sure are friendly when they get a cigaret," observed Tommy.

"Yes, friendly," agreed the Indian. "Pretty friendly country here, and quiet. Not much excitement."

"We-ell," judicially from Tommy, "the country looks like it had possibil'ties. I suttinly hope so."

They camped that night in a dry wash. A red coyote skulked along the foot of a rock face. Tommy fired, but the animal grew smaller with amazing rapidity, climbing a cliff that would tax the most agile of men. Prairie-dogs kept their heads cocked for an hour at a time in the afternoon sun, watching the proceedings in the camp.

In the morning they were away and up in the dark green sea of a mesa-top, dropping down into the Navajo Indian Reservation. Not so ready with a smile as the Hopis, these Navajos. A different people, different forebears, different customs, different temperament. The travelers passed many *hogans*, many old men, women and children came from doors facing east, always east, and begged cigarets.

In the afternoon they passed a *chinty-hogan*, a dwelling cleaned out by pestilence and never reentered, and all of Navatea's Mississippi Valley brogue did account in his steadfast refusal to approach the death-house. Tommy laughed, sensing a thrill, hoping to find a band of brigands, hoping he wouldn't, but Navatea's face was serious.

"Buck up," said Tommy jovially as they rode on. "That dump ain't been lived in for a coupla centuries. Trouble with you fellas 'at live down here, you pass up all the excitement. Like that coy-yot. Him an' me could had a real battle of brains, but all his brains is in his feet. Can't tell me there ain't some rip-snortin' things has took place down in this rag-tag country."

"They're bad, those *chinty-hogans*," said Navatea.

"That's what I like about 'em," Tommy returned. "Anything that's bad around this country, I'm for it. The badder it is, the more I'm for it. What's that, a river?"

"Another wash."

"Well, I ain't brought up on rivers," said Tommy. "The Chicago ain't any catarac,' but we got a right smart lake in our front yard, an' a little water wouldn't go bad."

"We'll find a sheep-hole, anyway."

They found more than a sheep-hole; they found two men beside it. The least reassuring pair in Northeastern Arizona is an Indian and a white, and these two ran to type, the white man short, bull-necked, with high glistening cheek-bones and little mean eyes; the Indian with a sharp, cruel face. They started up without ado, making for Tommy and Navatea.

"What d'y' want around these parts?" asked the white man bluntly as he came within speaking distance of Tommy.

Tommy was aware he, himself, was not prepossessing, and he felt that he was being bullied, but he had no fear. He saw that Navatea was engaged with the Navajo, whose jargon was inescapably unfriendly.

"We're just lookin' over the country," said Tommy in measured tones, his pale blue eyes like gas flames.

"Well, jus' keep right on lookin' it over, stranger," said the white man, "an' look it over out Monument Pass way. Know the direction?"

"Nope," returned Tommy, " 'cause that ain't our direction."

"It ain't, huh?"

"Nope."

Tommy even smiled a little.

"We figger on maybe we'll hit Rio Carriso."

The other started toward him menacingly, but Navatea at the moment intervened.

"We better go on," he said. "We'll make for Monument Pass."

"The —— we'll make for Monument Pass!" exclaimed Tommy. "Who owns this U. S. A., anyways?"

The white man cocked his head on one side and his face went crooked.

"You can claim 'bout six foot of it, stranger, if you don't take yer pardner's a'vice," he growled.

Tommy was in a singular position. Manifestly, this was a situation typical of foreign parts, and deserved to be handled in a foreign parts manner. On the other hand his rights as an American citizen hardly warranted bloodshed on the spot. Again, he couldn't trust Navatea. Navatea was clearly unaware of the course of action to be pursued by a he-man in a he-man country. Navatea was at this moment urging him earnestly to turn off for Monument Pass.

It was with a feeling of intense irritation that Tommy acceded to his companion's importunities. He did not look back; he feared he would draw his revolver. He was seething within, possessed by a sense of defeat that was poignant. They had ridden an hour before he spoke, and then it was in a paternal tone.

"There's one thing I don't understand, Johnny, and that is how you grew up in this country and learned to swallow a dose of quinin like that."

"We don't like trouble down here," said the Indian earnestly. "The Hopi nation is different from the Navajo nation. Those men are bad—very bad. They would shoot us."

"Well, we ain't paralyzed," said Tommy with some irritation. "I wisht that bounder had give me a excuse to plug him, just a little hip movement."

"He would've beat you to the draw."

"Fair enough," declared Tommy. "But lemme tell you sump'n: the only reason we didn't fight it out right there is because I don't want to kill a man, or get killed by 'im, just 'cause he runs at the mouth."

"Better not to have trouble with the Navajos."

"Trouble!"

Tommy was working himself into a fine rage.

"—— trouble! Say, I come out here lookin' for trouble. Then when it comes along a man brought up like you down here a'vises me to duck it. An' I duck it."

"I did what I thought was best, Mr. Oates."

Tommy shot his companion a swift glance.

"Sure, that's all right," he said. "I ain't blamin' you. You live down here, an' got yer family down here, an' all. What made 'em so hoss-tile?"

"You can't tell about them," said Navatea.

"Well, it don't make much difference. I'm goin' over Rio Carriso way, anyways. You can wait for me if you wanta."

"What?"

"Sure," averred Tommy. "I ain't goin' to shoot a man for runnin' at the mouth, but he's gotta show me a good abstrac' of title to keep me from goin' where I wanta go. Listen: my wife's sister come touring out this way last Summer, an' she's been spouting like a ten-year gusher 'bout Brice's Cañon. You know them tourists. She makes me sick. They say these San Juan cañons has got Brice's cheated."

Tommy consumed all of that afternoon and evening persuading Navatea to turn northeast toward the forbidden country, and it was with great reluctance that the Indian accompanied his white companion in the morning.

Dropping down north from a mesa they came upon one of those strange little pockets in the high plateau country that seem the exceptions scooped out to refute the aridity rule. A sheer drop of fifteen feet, rocks smooth with age, yellow, almost, as with age. Below was a clear stream, emerald green, a mirror dulled with a breath of wind like a vapor breath on a glass.

Beside this they camped. A quarter of a mile away, at the foot of a rock-slide issuing from the base of a mesa, they found some poor coal. Tommy's wonderment and delight were boundless.

"Can you tie that!" he cried, fondling the dirty lumps. "I thought this stuff come in box-cars. Say, this is a real sensation for a city guy. Just like a ham sandwich tree with a coffee spring under it. I get so I like this country better and better. Guess I'll import half a dozen truck-drivers an' mine this stuff—win or lose, alla same—just for the sport of takin' it outa the ground."

"You'd get the Navajos after you then," observed Navatea.

"Oh, listen," sniffed Tommy. "For honest-to—— Westerners, I never see such a tame bunch as you are. I come out here expectin' to see you fellas do a sword-swallowin' act before every meal, an' I'm the only bird west of Denver has got anything more deadly 'an a nail file on their person."

"You saw a couple of men yesterday."

"Four-flushers," pronounced Tommy. "I can find them guys in any pool-room on Halstead Street. Tell the honest truth, Johnny, this country looks pretty tame to me so far, an' I don't think there's a good rough stick-up gent from Denver to San Berdoo."

To tell the honest truth Tommy was not talking wholly through his hat, however bombastic his tone may have become. The Tommy in the glass-encased office in one corner of the big angel-cake shipping-room, and the Tommy digging coal in one corner of Arizona were actually different men. The sky, the sweep of air, the boundless distance, the grim, intrepid gray of the far hills, dissolved from the man the thick coating of wage-scales, and delivery costs, and wholesome respect for Mrs. Oates, and left him, for good or ill, stripped to the soul that had been born within him.

North, dim blue against the sky, lay the Abajo range. West, dark against the falling sun, rose Navajo peak. Before Tommy, smudgy and black, was a vein of coal!

In Chicago coal floats in the form of smoke.

IT WAS dawn, cool and inspiriting, and Tommy was puttering around at the coal-bed. He thought he would take some of the coal back to Chicago, and he stuffed some lumps in his pocket. In a rock crevice to one side, he discovered a yellow crystalline powder, and he scraped some of this into a pocket.

For the first time in his life Tommy wondered about the rocks. Why was this black stuff, this yellow stuff, here. He leaned over, looking closely, and a sliver of stone struck him in the cheek, with a hot sting.

He was so astonished that he toppled from his unsteady balance, and as he slipped to one knee he heard a plaintive whine and a sharp crack. Almost simultaneously arrived the report of a shot.

Tommy saw in the instant a dark figure astride a horse riding along a mesa-ridge a quarter of a mile away.

For the veriest moment Tommy was possessed of a profound fear, but even as it came it was overwhelmed by that commonplace emotion of the battlefield, fear of fear, and in which was mixed some pride, some grim determination, and not a little pure cussedness.

Tommy wriggled behind the coal-slide, whipped his revolver from its holster, and waited. A better thought told him not to wait long, and soon he was wriggling his way along the base of the rock face, and into some desert brush that screened him well.

When he moved the brush a bullet came with a sharp *ssssput* uncomfortably close, and he knew he was again in range. His eye caught a small defile with its base hidden by another mesquite clump. He made a lightning jump for this, and a savage burn, like the thrust of a stick, came in his left arm. In an instant he was in the miniature gorge and out of range.

He looked ruefully at the spreading splotch of crimson on his sleeve, but he found he could move his arm, that it was only a flesh wound.

Tommy felt that his assailant probably deemed him a turncoat, but he smiled to himself as he considered certain definite plans that might disabuse the other.

He scrambled up the defile as rapidly as his crippled arm would permit, and found that he was going just where he wanted to go—to the top of the small mesa. There were no piñons atop this mesa, and he was obliged to crawl from the point of the promontory. But he retained a general direction and when he had gone some distance he found he could cut across an indentation in the plateau, and reach the mesa-ridge from which the other had fired.

He became most wary, at length, but when he finally reached the other man he almost met sudden death. The man had dismounted, and was lying with a rifle trained on the spot where Tommy a few minutes before had vanished. He apparently had not distinguished the defile in the yet imperfect light of dawn.

But his horse neighed in alarm. The man whirled, but before he could swing his rifle, Tommy had stepped out behind him.

"Stick up them mitts!" Tommy snarled.

Slowly the other complied. Tommy was not astonished to note that it was the brigand of two days before.

"I guess I seen you before," Tommy snapped. "I'll learn you yellow-bellied rats to try and stick up a Chicago gangster. Back over by that rock an' make it snappy!"

Tommy backed toward the other's horse, and after some difficulty with his left arm, mounted. His arm throbbed, but the throbbing was dulled by a triumph he did not keep from his tone.

"Now, you wise Alec," he scoffed, "leave the rifle lay, an' get down that trail to camp, an' keep yer mitts right up to heaven, or you'll own about six feet of this here U. S. A., an' not no more."

It was pure good fortune, and no part of sagacity, that took Tommy into his camp in another spectacular triumph of the young morning. The brigand and his captor rounded a rock face and the sight that met Tommy's eyes was not one he would forget.

Navatea stood in the middle of their camp at the edge of the little cañon with hands upraised, while the Navajo companion of Tommy's quarry covered the Hopi with a revolver. The Navajo had his back to Tommy.

"Stick 'em up," said Tommy.

Apparently the Navajo understood that much English, and it was but a matter of minutes when Navatea had both of Tommy's prisoners bound and helpless. Then Navatea bound Tommy's wound, which did not present a serious aspect.

"What'll we do with 'em?" Navatea asked.

"Do with 'em!" sniffed Tommy. "We'll take 'em back to Holbrook an' put 'em in a drug-store window for tarantulas."

"We can't take them through the reservation."

"Why?"

"The Navajos would take them away from us."

"By the Great Lord Harry! I'll take these birds in to jail or hang 'em right here. We'll wait an' take 'em off the reservation tonight."

"Your wound——"

"To —— with my wound!" roared the now irascible Tommy, throwing his hat on the ground with his good right arm. "I come out here to start somethin,' an' I started it. Now I'm finishin' it up or stayin'there for good—tha's final. I ain't runnin' out of no country, an' I ain't climbin' on no rattler for Chi rememberin' I run out. Either I hold my head up an' face a Pullman porter, or I hold it up an' face St. Peter. If you wanta beat it, why beat it."

"I'll stay," said Navatea slowly.

"Good," returned Tommy in a milder tone. "Understand, Johnny, I know you folks ain't cowards. Don't get me wrong. It's just that yer so —— peaceful an' kind that you ain't so good in a hard-boiled world."

That night they started, through mesas of chiseled silver, into the interminable silver distance. Mile after mile, hour after hour, the two dark, stiff figures ahead, the two dark, slouched figures behind. One of these trailing figures was Tommy, and his slouch was more marked than his companion's.

Fever was mounting to his brain. Long arrows of pain moved slowly up his arm, like the writhing, advancing arrows on an electric sign. Toward morning a dull torpor seemed to possess him.

They crossed into the Hopi reservation in the dawn, and were safe from interference of the countryside. The sun arose, a hard, pale yellow, ineffably hot. Tommy had no fear. He strove mightily to keep his swimming eyes on the men ahead, the two erect, silent, sullen figures, that were the prisoners of Thomas Oates, conqueror of Arizona, conqueror of foreign parts.

"Foreign parts," Tommy laughed.

His companion gave him a sidewise glance, and he subsided like a shamed child. He must not give himself away. It was this triumph more than all else that buoyed him up; he must not let it be his undoing. He must direct his wandering mind to the matter in hand—delivering up his prisoners. It became a poignant obsession with him—delivering up his prisoners. With the exaggeration of delirium it became the index to his right to being. In one of those crazy-quilt images of a disordered mind he saw himself delivering up his prisoners, which were two sticks of cordwood fastened upright on horses. He tossed them at the feet of the United States Indian agent.

"Here's coupla bandits," he said.

He babbled it over and over to himself. He became very adroit at concealing his delirium from Navatea.

His brain swirled, recurring to the obvious, besetting things, traversing vast distances of irrelevance, or dropping helplessly into seas of forgetfulness. In clearer moments he called himself a fool, and bolstered his folly with an indomitable will to do what he had set out to do. Tommy Oates was inexorably following the dictates of that soul that had been born within him.

They rode on, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty miles.

They rode into Keams Cañon, to the trading-store, where a huge shiny automobile awaited a great surgeon who was buying his little daughter a Hopi saddle-blanket. Tommy fell from his pony, on the anguish that hung at his left side. He muttered something about arresting his prisoners, something about foreign parts. He heard, dimly, insistent calls for "Doc," as a sea of faces seemed to submerge him.

He thought his arm was being burned from his body by a white-hot iron. He could not connect such torture with the clean, close-cropped mustache, the keen, kind face, that swam before his flickering vision.

It was "Doc, this," and it was "Doc, that."

"'M out visiting f'reign parts, Doc," muttered Tommy.

"Sure," said the surgeon soothingly. "So'm I."

"I showed 'em up, doc."

"Sure," the surgeon's level, liquid tones went on. "We all do when we get away from home. I wouldn't dare try this with a jack-knife in Chicago."

"Chi—thass me. These rats—no license pick on Chi man——"

"Sure not. But those yellow crystals in your pocket—carnotite—radium prospectors, these chaps."

"Lookin' fer trouble, too, doc, 'n' found it."

SNOW fell like powdered diamonds past the corner light and described a graceful arc in the corner of the casement window. Tommy turned from the window to Johnny Navatea, whose countenance was etched in coral by the firelight.

"How 'bout a show?"

He snapped a platinum watch.

The two men, garbed in Tuxedos, arose and called for their coats. The Indian followed Tommy across the great hall to Mrs. Oates' library. Mrs. Oates had just returned from a flour-purchasing expedition to Minneapolis, and had not been to dinner.

"Er—my dear," said Tommy, "meet Mr. Navatea. Friend of mine, from down in the Desert, y'know. Visiting his brother here."

Mrs. Oates nodded.

"Er—you're not using the limousine?"

Mrs. Oates, immersed in demurrage rates, shook her head, with one movement giving Tommy his freedom and dismissing him. Tommy rang for the limousine, and at length the two settled back in its deep cushions bound for the Loop. Two blocks down the street two dark figures stepped from the curb.

"Henri, stop!"

But it was too late. The big car skidded on the snowy street and almost, it might be said, delivered itself into the hands of its captors. The blue of the arc light fell on the deeper blue of leveled automatics.

"Stick 'em up!" came the gruff command.

Both Tommy and Navatea raised their hands.

"Outside!" came the snarl.

The two slid outside.

Then, in the gloom, something happened. There was the crash of a shot, and the tinkle of falling glass, and, surprizingly, one of the bandits lay in the street, a dark heap against the snow. The other bandit was tripped, falling to his knees, and he received a kick in the face. Navatea was upon him, pummeling him to unconsciousness. Several pedestrians came running and another motor car stopped. At length came the flash of a policeman's star.

Tommy was white and shaking.

"My ——, Johnny, these Chicago gunmen——"

"I didn't come to get robbed," said Navatea, still panting with rage. "I didn't come visiting foreign parts to get robbed!"

PORTO BELLO GOLD

A Five-Part Story

Part Four

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Swain's End," "Swain, Jarl-Maker," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

I WAS in the counting-room talking with Peter Corlaer, the chief of our fur-traders, when the bond-boy, Darby McGraw, ran in.

"The Bristol packet is in, Master Robert," he cried. "And, oh, sir, the watermen do say there be a pirate ship off Sandy Hook!"

I went with the news to my father, whom I found in the company of Master Clinton, the Governor of the Colony of New York. They were great friends, despite the fact my father once had been a Jacobite. We reached them just as Captain Farraday, the master of the Bristol packet, was telling his story.

"Chased?" he cried to my father. "That I was, Master Ormerod, by the pirate frigate *Royal James*."

"That would be the vessel of the fellow known as Captain Rip-Rap," observed my father; and there was a quality in his voice and manner which led me to think that he labored in the grip of some strong emotion.

"True for you, Master Ormerod," answered Captain Farraday. "A complete rogue, but a man of exquisite dress and manners. And moreover as arrant a Jacobite as ever was. He works with John Flint, who is no less of a rascal, albeit rougher. Flint sails in the *Walrus*. Between them they ha' the metal to hammer a brace of King's ships."

Captain Farraday stopped for breath, and Governor Clinton seized the opportunity to ask with a smile:

"Captain Rip-Rap did you call your pursuer? What manner of name is this?"

"He is singularly partial to that mixture of snuff," answered Captain Farraday. "I am told his own men give him that name, for even they do not know that to whice he was born. 'Tis said he was a gentleman who suffered for his political convictions."

Later, when we were alone in the counting-room—Peter, my father and I—they told me the secret they shared with Captain Rip-Rap. He was Andrew Murray, my mother's uncle.

"But," I cried, "he was the great trader who conducted the contraband trade with Canada. 'Twas he whom you and Corlaer and the Iroquois fought when you broke down the barriers of the Doom Trail and won back the fur-trade for our people. Why, 'twas then you—and——"

I knew the deep feeling my father still had for my dead mother, and I scrupled to stir his memories.

Next morning I took Darby with me to make a business call on Captain Farraday. As we walked along the water-front we saw a Spanish frigate and a battered little brig at anchor, the latter with a cannon-shot hole in her side. A one-legged sailor who said that he was off the latter vessel introduced himself as Long John Silver and told us a thrilling story of how the ship had been pursued by Rip-Rap. He was so ingratiating that I lent him Darby to guide him to his destination, the Whale's Head Tavern.

By the time I had finished my business on board the Bristol packet the afternoon was gone. I was on my way back to the counting-house when I was stopped by a group from the Spanish ship.

"Sir," said a young lady whom they were escorting, "can you direct me to the Whale's Head?"

She appeared to be the last sort of woman who might be expected to have anything to do with this noted resort of bad characters. Matters grew clearer when she explained that she sought her father, Colonel O'Donnell, a Jacobite exile in the service of Spain. I not only guided her to the tavern, but

---

As already set forth, "Porto Bello Gold" is the story of how the treasure came to be on Treasure Island. The writing of the story was undertaken with the approval of Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson's literary executor.

went inside to tell the colonel that his daughter awaited him. There I found Darby, with Long John and a couple of his cronies, known as Bill Bones and Black Dog. The boy obviously was captivated by Long John's tales of the sea. Silver volunteered to find O'Donnell for me. He professed not to know the Irishman, but had no difficulty in locating him.

That evening after dinner we had a call from Captain Rip-Rap. He spoke of "launching the coup of his career," one which "will echo in throne-rooms and chancelleries," and announced that I was his heir and that as such he wanted me to be his assistant. I refused to go. Immediately a gang of his men entered with Long John at their head. Darby McGraw, his head turned by Silver's alluring tales, had joined the pirates and as his first lawless act had let them into the house. As they trussed me up, Peter insisted on going too, and they obliged him—"your muscles should prove useful," observed my great-uncle, noting his tremendous strength.

The pirates rowed out to the brig and took us aboard. My great-uncle had a short conversation with O'Donnell regarding a Spanish ship, the *Santissima Trinidad*, the full purport of which I did not understand. I did gather, though, that there was a Jacobite plot afoot, as a detail to which O'Donnell and his daughter were to be taken off the Spaniard and become the guests of Murray on his pirate vessel. But how? Why? When? Where?

Well, O'Donnell went back at last to his Spanish frigate, and we put to sea. Once the pirates had us where we couldn't escape, our bonds were removed and Silver became his hypocritically unctuous and expansive self. Among other things I learned from him that the brig had been especially captured for this visit to New York; that its original crew of honest men had been murdered, and that as soon as we came up with the *Royal James* and the *Walrus*, this vessel was to be sunk and the prime ruffians who now temporarily manned it were to be retransferred to their original stations on the two pirate craft. Silver told me all this while acting as lookout for the helmsman, a horrible blind villain named Pew who steered by the feel of the wind in the sails.

As we three talked on, the sailing-master, Bill Bones, came along and picked a fight with Peter Corlaer. Seasick though he was, the huge Dutchman still had strength enough to take Bones' knife away from him and haul him over the halyard, where Peter proceeded to reeve a landsman's slip-noose. Bones was saved from being hanged by my great-uncle, who told him that another infraction of discipline would result in his being keel-hauled.

NEXT day we met the *Walrus* and the *Royal James*, blew up the pirated brig and transferred the crew to their respective ships, all according to plan. Peter and I were taken aboard my great-uncle's ship, while Silver, Darby McGraw, Bones, Pew and Black Dog were among those returned to Flint's command.

My great-uncle was now prepared to talk over his "coup" with Flint.

"During our Spanish cruises," he said, "I established connections with a group of Jacobite gentlemen who can tell me when and from what port this year's royal treasure-ship will sail for Spain. I have just finished arrangements with my principal confederate, whom I met in New York. It simply remains for us to execute the plan."

The treasure amounted to one million five hundred thousand pounds. Murray announced that it was to be divided thus: One hundred thousand pounds to himself as author of the scheme; seven hundred thousand to the two ships, and seven hundred thousand to the confederates. Flint was to stay hidden in the harbor of the pirates' rendezvous at Spyglass Island—known also as Treasure Island—while the *Royal James*, masquerading as a King's frigate, was to cruise for the treasure-ship. Peter and I were to remain in Flint's hands as hostages against Murray's return. Flint cursed at the terms, but he had to take either them or nothing, and at last he acquiesced.

After Flint had departed my uncle confided further details to me. The treasure-ship was the *Santissima Trinidad;* the Jacobite confederates were represented by Colonel O'Donnell, and the money was to be used to restore Bonnie Prince Charlie to the throne of England. As inspector of fortifications of the Spanish ports on the Main O'Donnell had learned that the *Trinidad* was to sail from Porto Bello; and now he undertook to learn the closely guarded secret of her exact sailing-date, to take passage on her with his daughter, using the King's business as a pretext thereto, and to send all necessary information on to us in advance by another confederate. When we had captured the *Trinidad* we were to take him and his daughter on board and make off for Treasure Island to divide the plunder and concert arrangements for delivering their share to O'Donnell's friends. The *Trinidad* was to be scuttled with all on board. I vetoed this last barbarity, and instead we agreed that Murray in his rôle of the pirate Captain Rip-Rap was to make a pretense of bearing off the girl as booty and of imprisoning the father to silence his objections.

We changed our course to bring us to Treasure Island, where we careened and refitted the *Royal James*. Flint's crew refused to do such menial work upon the *Walrus*, so my great-uncle kept them out of mischief by having them build a fort. When all was in readiness Murray turned Peter and me over to Flint and prepared to sail on the morning tide.

BUT my heart failed me at the thought of the fate which that innocent girl Moira, who was to be taken aboard with the treasure, might have to face should Murray play false or should our plans go astray. So that night Peter and I escaped and stowed away on the *Royal James*, with the connivance of Ben Gunn, the ship's steward.

The pirating of the *Trinidad* was readily accomplished, and we were able to effect the removal of O'Donnell and his daughter to the *James* without arousing suspicion among the Spaniards. Then, because he did not trust Flint, my great-uncle decided that, before he returned to Treasure Island, he would bury the seven hundred thousand pounds due O'Donnell and his friends, as well as his own personal share of one hundred thousand. He had it unloaded on the Dead Man's Chest, a small island south of Porto Rico in the Virgin Group, left O'Donnell, Moira, Peter and me to hide it, and sailed off, promising to return for us in five days. We concealed it in a spot where the dense jungle growth would soon render its discovery impossible to all save those who had an exact chart showing its whereabouts.

In due course Murray returned and picked us up again.

CHAPTER XV

SUSPICIONS

FROM the Dead Man's Chest the *Royal James* headed northeast into the Atlantic. Murray knew that the *Santissima Trinidad* must have sent the tidings of his feat the length and breadth of the Antilles. By now the Spanish squadrons would have put to sea from San Juan de Porto Rico, Santo Domingo and the Havana, and the Caribbean would be aswarm with *garda costas;* but more to be feared than all the Spaniards' efforts would be the consequence of the complaint sure to be dispatched to the port admiral at Kingston. The Jamaica frigates would carry a hunting-call to every English cruiser on the West Indian station.

As it was, we were chased by a strange sail in the latitude of southern Hispaniola, whose heaping canvas and lumbering gait bespoke the ship-o'-the-line; and off Cuba we sighted three sail—a frigate and two sloops—who chased us two days and a night to the eastward. And the day after that we encountered the Brazils fleet, under convoy of two sail of the line and half a dozen small fry, but my great-uncle, nothing daunted, displayed his white ensign, fired a salute to the Portuguese admiral and sailed through them.

Then we picked up a smart so'easter and ran our westing down packet-fashion, with never a sail in sight for a week, until a morning when the sun came up at our backs like a burnished copper plaque and we saw the cone of the Spyglass lifting out of the haze ahead. A league or two farther on the whole island shaped itself beneath its spine of hills, and a column of smoke from the Spyglass told us that Flint's lookout had detected us.

The wind had continued strong through the night, but after dawn it turned puffy and 'twas nearly noon when we passed into Captain Kidd's anchorage on the last of the flood. There was a great bustle aboard the *Walrus*, with boats plying to and from the shore, and as our anchor splashed, the longboat put off from her side, Flint's red coat like a flame in the stern sheets.

"Glory!" exclaimed Moira O'Donnell, her blue eyes wide with delighted horror. "There's one I'd not need to have pointed out to me to know him a pirate—or the dreadful knaves that do be rowing the oars. My faith, look to the color of them, as red as Indians with the sun, and they without the clothes any heathen would be by way of wearing."

She clapped her hands.

"But I like the kerchiefs on their heads. See! All red and green and yellow and blue. And the marks they have done in their skins."

Her father was otherwise impressed. He glowered down at the heap of treasure kegs, chests and packages which Murray had ordered fetched on deck that morning, and then stared off at Flint's gaudy figure.

"And 'tis to scoundrels like yon ye'll be trusting the lives of all of us, Andrew Murray!" he snarled. "By times, man, I think there's a green madness in your brain. Why, the view of that gold and silver below would be sufficient to tempt better men than they to commit murder."

My great-uncle took snuff.

"Your diagnosis is correct, *chevalier,*" he retorted. "They would cheerfully commit murder for a coveted knife or a sixpence with a hole in it. My design in revealing to them the entire extent of the treasure we carry is to impress them at once with my good faith and benumb their acquisitive faculties by the sight of greater wealth than they ever dreamed of obtaining at one time."

A snort from Peter diverted attention to the Dutchman.

"You do not agree with me?" inquired Murray mildly.

"*Neen!* A t'ief is a t'ief. He steals to steal."

"Plausible," assented my great-uncle. "Your idea is?"

"If Flint has der feel for it it don't matter what you show him. He wants all."

"Ah!"

Murray regarded more attentively the boatload of pirates just rounding up to our port quarter.

"I see that Captain Flint has with him John Silver and the red-haired Irish boy he calls his luck. Humph! You may be right, friend Peter. But I should not be greatly concerned over that. In many ways——"

He broke off, considering. Colonel O'Donnell caught him up.

"Yes? Yes? What new deviltry are you planning?"

My great-uncle smiled.

"Certes, 'tis no deviltry to plan in a good cause—in the Good Cause. Eh, Mistress Moira?"

She shook her head.

"You will be too quick with your wits for me to fathom them, Master Murray," says she. "I am but a young maid that knows no more than that right is right."

"I protest you underrate yourself," he answered.

"What Moira thinks is of no consequence," interrupted O'Donnell. "You have not answered me."

"True, *chevalier*. I was thinking. My thoughts are not completely shapen, but 'twill do no harm if I reveal that it occurred to me that in many ways it might simplify our problem did Captain Flint resort to force."

The Irishman counted the gunports in the *Walrus'* side.

"He seems to carry as heavy metal——"

"But on the sea, as on the land, 'tis the brain which overmatches brute force, *chevalier*. You, who are an engineer, do not need to be reminded of this axiom. However, we are not yet come to the issue, and I am never one for engaging in a search for trouble. All I know clearly at this moment is that we can not afford to wander far afield from the island, with the cruisers of three nations quartering the seas for us."

"We are in an *impasse*," reflected O'Donnell gloomily.

"Not at all," rejoined my great-uncle. "We have played our hand with entire success so far in the game. 'Tis now for us to sit back and await the plays of other participants. What they do must determine our next— But Captain Flint is come aboard. This conversation is without purpose, since fact must now displace conjecture."

He eyed us all somewhat gravely.

"I have but one word more to say," he added. "Whatever happens, leave me to do the talking."

"Ye'd do it whether we would or no," growled O'Donnell.

Flint climbed over the bulwarks with a racket of oaths and swaggered up to the poop. Martin dropped a whip from a block on the mainyard, and John Silver was hauled up in its bight, his crutch hanging from his neck. Darby and the rest scaled the side ladder and mingled with the *James'* crew. Their eyes popped from their heads as they circled the heap of treasure, Long John stumping with them, listening avidly to the accounts of the *James'* men, hefting the weight of the packages of bullion and painfully deciphering the inscriptions on the kegs and chests of coin.

Their chief was equally frank in revealing the lust of greed the picture wakened in him. His green eyes flickered hotly on either side of his thin, beaked nose, and his blue jowl was bluer than ever, the weather-worn skin over his cheekbones laced with a network of crimson veins that brightened as his excitement increased.

Yet he forgot the treasure the instant his gaze fell upon Peter and me.

"So your hostages returned to ye, Murray? Gut me, 'twas a pretty trick ye played us! Ye'd keep faith wi' me, ye would! Oh, yes! Ye'd give me two hostages, instead o' one. You'll fulfill your contract, you will. There's no need for it, to be sure, but ye'll do anything to prove good faith to me! And take both or none, says you. Both or none! Well, ye fooled me that time, Murray, but ye never will again, by thunder—not if my name's John Flint!"

My great-uncle heard him out in silence, waiting until he had stepped off the poop-ladder and stood facing us.

"I am not responsible for your losing the hostages," he replied then in his iciest tones. "Stap me, Flint, I warned you your ship was in a disgraceful condition. With all hands drunk, did you think to keep fast two men of strength and intelligence?"

"Drunk or sober, we were promised them," asserted Flint, a trifle less belligerently. "And sure, ye could ha' turned 'em back to us—not that that will do me any good for the two men they killed, they or whoever helped 'em to break from the *Walrus*."

"Nobody from the *Royal James* assisted them," said Murray. "You have my word for that. I can not say as much for your own ship, although they told me when they discovered themselves to me, several days after our sailing, that they had acted alone."

"Alone or not, where's my two men?" blustered Flint. "Good hands don't grow on trees."

"No; aboard the *Walrus* they stab one another to death," agreed my great-uncle. "Come, come, you have no proof in support of your charge."

"No proof?" howled Flint. "These two broke out of my lazaret, and the same night the two men on watch——"

My great-uncle raised his eyebrows.

"Tut, tut! Really, now! 'Two men on watch!' What would you have? John Silver and Blind Pew could have escaped from such slender guards, let alone two whole men, one of them the strongest ever I knew."

"Well, two broke free and two died," insisted Flint. "And if the two who broke free were not the means——"

"What proof have you of it?"

"Proof?"

"Aye, proof, I said. Their bodies, what of them?"

"Why, we never——"

My great-uncle shrugged his shoulders.

"You see? You have been talking loosely, I fear, my friend. But you must suffer me to repeat that if you left your ship all night with a watch of two men on deck you deserved to lose your hostages and the lives of the watch. At any rate, you'll not have my sympathy."

Flint's fingers twitched on his hanger-hilt.

"I tell ye, Murray, there's a foul smell about this whole business. You were all for giving me hostages—'twas no idea of mine. And then they no sooner come aboard my ship than they're away again. I like it not. Here's trickery or ye may gut me for a preacher."

"Had I found your hostages on the *James* before sailing or within a day after, you should have had them back again," said Murray firmly. "But there is no point to this argument; for hostages or no hostages, you see me returned with the treasure, as I promised."

"—— me, ye've been long enough gone," complained Flint. "It hath been a month more than ye promised."

"For that I had excellent reasons," answered my great-uncle. "I was chased twice on my way thither."

Flint was impressed by this—also, his eyes strayed as if lured by a magnet of irresistible power, back to the heap of treasure on the deck below.

"Ye must ha' had rare success," he admitted unwillingly. "We ha' the gold o' the Indies here!"

He looked up and happened to meet the awe-struck gaze of Moira O'Donnell. A sneer curled his lips.

"But ye carry passengers, I see," he insinuated. "Gold and women! 'Tis a fine combination, Murray, but there's a rule in our Articles you were all for establishing. Number Four, eh? It sticks in my crop, for ye called it once on me.

> "And that there may be less occasion for broils amongst our company, we do further decree that gaming may be prohibited at any time when in the captain's judgment it becomes dangerous to our harmony, as likewise, that at no time and under no circumstances may women be taken and kept as spoil aboard our vessels or any vessel upon which our company may chance to fare.

"What d'ye say to that? What of Rule Four now?"

"I wish it was observed as strictly aboard the *Walrus* as on the *Royal James*," returned Murray. "As to gaming, it seems that you allow your crew full license."

"I'll govern my own ship," responded Flint sourly. "Ye ha' yet to answer my questions?"

My great-uncle took snuff.

"This lady," he said, with the slightest emphasis, "is the daughter of my friend here, Colonel O'Donnell, a gentleman who represents in our venture the group of my friends who made it possible for me to intercept the treasure-ship."

O'Donnell, whose face had been growing redder and redder throughout this conversation, plucked his daughter by the elbow and led her away.

"I'll be thanking ye to let me know when the time comes there's an end o' mangy curs in these parts," he remarked over his shoulder. " 'Tis not to be hearing my daughter insulted and my own self explained to the scum of the sea that I'll be standing quiet and idle in front of as——"

"Peace, *chevalier*!" interrupted Murray, and there was a ring in his voice that compelled obedience.

Flint's blue jowl took on a sickly greenish pallor and the tiny veins over his cheekbones commenced to beat.

"—— me for a —— —— —— if I'll stand for such from any sneaking, long-jawed, Irish Papist ——"

"That will do," said my great-uncle without raising his voice.

Flint subsided.

"Colonel O'Donnell and his daughter are my guests," my great-uncle continued. "They have played essential parts in our capture of the treasure. I must insist, Flint, that you accord them a courtesy similar to that which I should extend to friends of yours in a like situation."

"They're no friends o' mine," growled Flint. "This is more o' your cursed political blethering. Well, I'm sick o' it, Murray, and I care not who knows it. First, ye carry us north to America, just to crimp two men, with not two hundred pounds in booty to show for the voyage. Next, ye shut me up here for the better part of six months for my men to rot with fever and drink and my ship to foul her bottom——"

"On both these counts you have your own negligence to blame," put in my great-uncle.

"— and last," Flint fumed on without heeding him, "ye bring to the Rendeyvoo a man and a woman who are not of our company, and who, for all ye know, may go hence and loose a King's ship on us some day when we are careened and helpless."

"Not you," returned Murray sarcastically. "You'll not careen, Flint. That would mean work for your crew. But you concern yourself needlessly. Colonel O'Donnell has reasons for keeping his share in our enterprise under cover. He is more safely to be trusted in the circumstances than many another."

"I care not who he is or what hold you may have on him," cried Flint, working himself into a fury. "Ye ha' introduced four strangers into our midst without the let or permission of others of our company."

"I do not recognize the right of any other to tell me what I shall or shall not do," replied my great-uncle haughtily. "Such as it is, this company is the creation of my efforts, and I venture the assertion, Captain Flint, that it will not long survive my leadership. The four strangers of whom you complain have been essential factors in enabling me to win the treasure before you—which now awaits your convenience for division, according to the terms I originally stipulated."

* * *

IF MURRAY'S last words were intended to stimulate Flint's cupidity anew they succeeded. The captain of the *Walrus* opened his mouth to shout defiance, then let his eyes wander again to the pile under the break of the poop.

"How—how much?" he asked, almost fearfully.

"Seven hundred and sixty-three thousand, nine hundred and ninety-five pounds in coin and bullion, without counting a chest of jewels and three chests of plate," replied my great-uncle promptly. "You will note that I have favored our people in the division, allotting to them all in excess of the million and a half pounds the *Santissima Trinidad* was expected to carry."

A cunning look crept into Flint's face.

"Where's the rest?" he croaked.

My great-uncle took snuff.

"Quite safely disposed of, I assure you," he answered.

"Down below?"

"No, 'tis no longer aboard."

Flint swallowed hard.

"Ye mean it ain't here? It ain't aboard the *James*?"

"Precisely, captain."

"Gut me!" roared Flint. "Ye divided it by your lone? Wi'out a man from the *Walrus* to stand by and see fair play? I'll not support it, Murray. Curse me if I will!"

My great-uncle tapped his snuff-box.

"Your suspicions are quite unnecessary," he said. "Had I intended to defraud you, be sure I would not have enlarged the sum intended for division betwixt the two ships by sixty-three thousand pounds and more. Indeed, figuring in the jewels and plate, there must be an excess of better than one hundred thousand pounds."

"I know your tricks!" yelled Flint. "May I be —— —— for a —— —— —— if any lousy swab of a sea-lawyer politician is a-goin' to cast dust in my eyes. 'Twould be the very thing you'd do, Murray, to attempt to cozen me into believing seven hundred thousand pounds had been set aside for your 'friends' by throwing in an extra one hundred thousand pounds for our division. 'Friends!' By thunder, the only friend ye know is yourself, ye dried-up wisp of a ——"

"That will do," said my great-uncle in his still, level voice.

Flint opened and shut his mouth rapidly without a sound issuing forth.

"I bar personalities, captain," warned my redoubtable relative.

One hand barely touched his sword-hilt.

"I trust there will be no occasion for me to repeat the warning," he remarked.

Flint's baffled rage was comic to behold.

"Aye, you and your fine gentleman ways!" he choked. "I know ye! Gut me if I'll support it to be swindled thus. A woman and strangers aboard! And eight hundred thousand pounds of one million five hundred thousand pounds missing! 'Safely disposed of,' says you! I'll warrant. Safe where you can collar it any time you please. I knowed it as soon as I marked the flutter of a petticoat. A woman and gold——"

Long John Silver swung himself up on to the poop from the head of the port ladder and stamped toward us.

"Beggin' your pardon, Cap'n Murray, sir!" His pleasant voice broke through Flint's diatribe.

"My duty, Master Ormerod. And Master Corlaer, too. Like old times, ain't it, gentlemen, all of us together? I hopes as how ye'll overlook my boldness, Cap'n Murray, but I ha' a word to speak to Cap'n Flint—fo'csle council, sir."

My great-uncle took another pinch of snuff.

"Ah, yes," he observed drily. "I recall that aboard the *Walrus* the fo'csle council must be heard. I trust that you can instil some common sense into your captain's head. He hath need of it, Silver."

Flint glared, but Silver snatched whatever reply he intended out of his mouth.

"Thank 'ee, sir. You just let me an' Cap'n Flint ha' a word in private, and maybe we'll see a way out o' this tangle."

"Suit yourself," said my great-uncle with a shrug.

Silver pulled his forelock, and his large face lighted up as if a considerable favor had been conferred.

"We won't be no time at all, sir. Thank 'ee kindly."

He put his free hand under Flint's elbow, and I marveled to see the ease with which he was able to bend his captain to his will. Accustomed as I was to Murray's autocratic discipline, it was a revelation to establish contact again with the free-and-easy spirit of the *Walrus*, where any man might become commander if he was able to muster a majority of the fo'csle to raise cutlases in his behalf. Flint obediently followed his quartermaster to the sta'b'd side of the poop, and there they laid their heads close and collogued for a quarter-glass, Silver at first arguing and Flint resisting him.

"Silver is no man to let hard on four hundred thousand pounds slip through his hands," I said.

"Andt maybe he says not to let eight hundred thousand pounds get away, needer," commented Peter. "*Ja*, I t'ink so."

Murray nodded slowly.

"You are more like to be right than wrong, friend Peter. Of all the *Walrus*' people he hath the most acute intelligence. A choice knave!"

Colonel O'Donnell stalked back to us from the extremity of the stern with Moira on his arm.

"Did ye put a flea in the rascal's ear, Murray?" he demanded. "By the ——, I never thought to hear ye tolerate such impudence on your own deck."

"I am no man for quarreling without an adequate end in sight," returned my great-uncle. "Never threaten unless you must, *chevalier*, and then smite with a sure aim."

"Words!" grumbled the Irishman. " 'Tis time we had a little action."

Moira disengaged herself from her father and came to stand betwixt Peter and me.

"If there's to be more fighting," says she, "I will have a pistol and cutlas and do my share. I'll not stand idly by to be shot at the way I was on the *Santissima Trinidad*—more by reason that if I must sail with pirates I'll be preferring Captain Murray to the fellow yonder in the red coat."

There was a high gallantry about her that drew a chuckle even from Peter.

"Some time I take you to der wilderness country, andt we shoot us bears andt scalp Injuns," he promised.

She clasped her hands.

"I am all for that, Peter," she cried. "Sure, I'd sooner fight Indians than pirates. But see, Bob! There's the red-headed boy will be making signals to you from the port ladder."

Darby McGraw's flaming top-knot projected just far enough above the level of the deck to show his eyes and a hand that jerked mysteriously at me.

"Come up, Darby," I invited him.

But he shook his head vigorously, so I crossed to his side.

"What is ailing you?" I asked.

"Sorra a trouble in the whole of creation," he returned in his rich brogue. "But I'd walk my two feet over the galley-stove as soon as stand so near the old —— as yourself, Master Bob. My troth, he's the terrible cruel feller, and him that ancient old he'd oughter been waked these many years past."

"He's no more to be feared than Flint," I answered, laughing.

"Ah, there's little ye know to be saying the like of that!" exclaimed Darby. "With Flint 'tis a blow and a curse and 'take it or leave it!' But him! He'd put the evil eye on the lot of us if the notion but came into the head of him."

"I'd rather be his friend than his enemy," I admitted. "Do they fear him so aboard tha *Walrus*?"

Darby squinted sideways at me.

"Whiles they fear him. And then again when the rum is flowing— But I'll be saying what maybe I'll be sorry for later. I see ye found the elegant young maid that went to the Whale's Head with ye. My faith, ain't she the pretty creature! Will she be a pirate, too?"

"No more than Peter and me."

"Do ye tell me that same! And ye took her along with the treasure, the lads do be saying below. That was the grand haul! But they say, too, a good half of it ye buried on that island Long John do be always singing about."

"So you have heard that!" I cried.

"Troth, yes. They was telling Long John and me before he come up to speak with Cap'n Flint. God save us, who'd think there was so much money in the world? But here comes John and the cap'n now. I'd better be skippin'."

He slid down the ladder as he spoke, and I rejoined the group about my great-uncle. Flint strode across the deck, his face like a thunder-cloud. Silver, at his elbow, exhibited a countenance wreathed in smiles.

"We'll divide what's below," said Flint abruptly.

"I rejoice that you have come to your senses," replied Murray.

Silver spoke up.

"He's a main jealous cap'n, Cap'n Flint is, sir. Allus has a lookout for the interests o' his crew. A kind o' gardeen for us, ye might say. But we're all mighty beholden to yourself for counting in the *Walrus* same as the *James;* and speakin' on behalf o' the *Walrus*, I make bold to say as we won't forget it, Cap'n Murray, sir."

My great-uncle listened to this with the shadow of a smile on his face.

"I thank you, Silver," he acknowledged blandly. "I was confident you would appreciate the situation. Will you divide at once, Flint?"

Flint growled in his throat, then mastered his temper by a substantial effort.

"We'll appoint the usual committee o' six to check over with your men, Murray," he rasped. "I'll send my boats to shift our portion."

And he turned on his heel. John Silver pulled his forelock and nodded to all of us.

"Thank 'ee kindly, Cap'n Murray. My duty, sirs. And the young lady. Mighty nice to ha' a sweet, pretty face in the cabin, ain't it? Well, gentlemen, there's no excuse now for any o' us if we don't go home and make them happy as we left for the sea."

"Not the slightest," agreed my great-uncle. "I take it you are returning to your dear old mother, Silver—or is it your fondly waiting wife?"

Silver grinned.

" 'Tain't neither, sir. But there's a sightly gal in St. Pierre in Martinico as I could set up shop with. A bit o' color in her, but then——"

He swept his arm in a liberal gesture as he stumped off to the ladder and hopped lightly down to the maindeck after his commander.

CHAPTER XVI

TREACHERY

THE candles burned with a steady, spear-shaped flame, undeviating, motionless, so that the shadows were cast upon the paneling of the cabin walls in solid blocks like streaks of a darker coloring in the polished woodwork. The air was so still that we could hear the sea-birds calling down the inlet, the seeth and suck of water about the rudder, the splash of a fish, the patter of the feet of the watch.

Mistress O'Donnell had retired to her stateroom, with the appearance of the wine, for both her father and Murray held punctiliously to the polite usage of society in this respect, Colonel O'Donnell, I think, because he dreaded lest she should witness one of his periodical bouts when he would saturate himself to a state of insensibility, and Peter and I must carry him to his berth, as we had done the first night he came aboard the *Royal James.*

My great uncle, for want of other diversion, had undertaken to teach Peter to play chess, with some saturnine advice and comment from the Irishman; and to my amusement—as likewise to Murray's, I must admit—Peter proved himself a most redoubtable tyro, and once he had been coached in the rudiments presented a shrewd defensive gambit.

"Check at last!" exclaimed my relative, sinking back in his chair—of the four of us, he alone wore coat and stock and still contrived to maintain an air of cool well-being in that humid atmosphere. "You pushed me, Peter. Stap me, but you did! I'd not like to match my game with yours six months from now. Had you developed your queen's knight eight moves back—But 'tis futile to argue concerning what might have been. As well seek to prognosticate the future of our own lives."

Peter giggled and muttered that he was "no goodt, *neen*."

"I would we might say, 'Check!' in this weary coil we are caught in," grumbled O'Donnell. "I see not that we are any farther forward with your confederates yonder."

He waved his hand out of the stern-window.

"They carried away their four hundred thousand pounds, but every man of them was as glum in the face as though 'twas so many bodeens instead of a prince's ransom. St. Patrick! When I think of what four hundred thousand pounds would do with the English Parliamentmen that will be selling their souls to whoever bids them the highest!"

"We have paid a price, *chevalier*," returned my great-uncle. "If we receive what we purchased, well and good. If not——"

He spread out his hands in deprecation.

"I am bound to concede, however, that I do not augur the best from what little information we have to go upon. Have you noted, gentlemen, that still as is the night, we hear no sounds of carousing aboard the *Walrus*?"

'Twas true, and had been true since the last boatload of treasure was transfered to Flint's ship shortly after dusk.

"You think he will fight then?" I asked from my seat under the stern windows, whence I could see the lights of the *Walrus*, dimly yellow in the thick, velvety, tropic darkness.

"I *hope* he will fight, my dear nephew," my great-uncle corrected me. "I fear Captain Flint has outlived his usefulness to me, and if my fears are well founded, the sooner we can smash him the better I shall be pleased. But I make it a rule never to think on the possibilities of the future. Rather I prepare for whatever eventualities may arise and let it go at that."

"And are ye prepared tonight for treachery if this fellow Flint will be turning upon ye?" demanded O'Donnell.

Murray indulged himself with a pinch of snuff.

"Within reason, *chevalier*, yes. We have a strict watch, and the battery hath been cast loose and provided. More I can not do. The one advantage which Flint possesses is that I must wait upon whatever line of conduct he devises or his crew dictate to him."

The Irishman downed a goblet of brandy in a single gulp.

"Bah!" he cried. "'Tis easy enough for you to be talking the like of that. But I tell ye I am thinking we'd maybe better choose the now whether we'll push the fighting to Flint or pass out to sea."

My great-uncle shook his head.

"That would be poor tactics, either way. A fight means loss of life and ship damage, and if it can be avoided without loss we are by so much the gainer. Also, the seas are dangerous for us, as you should know, *chevalier*—and for another reason, Martin agrees with me the weather is working up for a violent storm."

"By the blessed ——!" protested O'Donnell. "I'm not able at all to make out how ye stand, Murray, and that's the naked truth. One moment you're crying for a fight with Flint, and the next you say to avoid it, if that can be managed."

"Quite true, *chevalier*," assented my great-uncle calmly. "And I fail to see that my position is a false one. I prefer not to force the issue. My policy is summed up in that."

"But you don't know what der *Walrus* will do, dot's der trouble," said Peter, looking up from the chessmen with which he had been toying on the table-top.

"And that too I have admitted, friend Peter," answered Murray.

"One night Bob andt me swam in der water from der *Walrus* to der *James*," pursued Peter as if my great uncle had not spoken. "Maybe we could do dot again, *ja*."

"Ha!" cried O'Donnell, smiting the table with his fist. "The very thing."

But my great-uncle sat unmoved.

"It could be done!" I exclaimed. "And none besides ourselves have knowledge of it."

Murray's wonderful, tawny eyes settled upon my face.

"Aye, it could be done," he agreed. "But there is danger, lad. 'Tis a still night. You can hear the fish leap."

"And Flint's people keep a slovenly watch," I replied. "But Peter and I are good swimmers. We'll not make a sound."

Peter commenced to blow out the candles.

"*Ja,*" he said. "Me, I don't like der water when it makes waves, but quiet it is nice."

My great-uncle smiled in the dwindling light.

"I should be a hypocrite as well as a fool, did I refuse your offer, gentlemen," he said. "'Tis not only our own lives are at stake, but Mistress Moira's too."

A groan came from Colonel O'Donnell.

"Ah, didn't I tell ye the way we would be left to the mercy of your cutthroats and latch-drawers, Murray? And now 'tis yourself must admit it! A sorry business it is, and I wish to —— I'd never heard your name or gone forth of Spain."

Murray himself blew out the last candle.

"Well, well, *chevalier,*" he answered a little tartly, "forth of Spain you went, and aboard the *Royal James* you are, and the one hope of life you have is that you stay aboard the *Royal James*—and this is saying naught of the obligations we owe to your friends on the other side."

Peter's great bulk glided by us.

"I go get a rope," he squeaked.

"A rope!" hiccuped O'Donnell. "And if we don't end in the noose of a rope, we'll likely be walking the plank. I care little for myself. I'll have seen my life and had my fling. But it was an ill day, Murray, you prevailed on me to fetch Moira along. I can't think what was in your mind—a young maid in a pirate hold! 'Tis wicked past belief."

"Tut, tut," remonstrated my great-uncle. "My reasons were of the best, and have been vindicated by events. But here is Peter. You found the rope?"

"*Ja,*" answered Peter, and knotted an end around a leg of the table as I had done the night of our surreptitious entry.

O'Donnell sought solace in another glass of brandy. Murray assisted Peter and me to undress, and accompanied us to the stern windows.

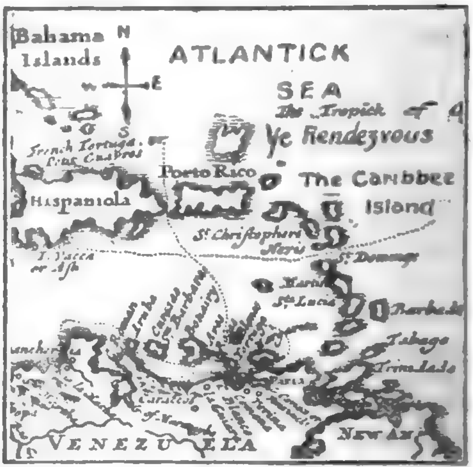
"No needless risks, remember," he whispered as I crawled over the sill. "And above all, avoid discovery. Better learn nothing than be found out."

I had wrapped my ankles around the pendent rope and was prepared for a cautious slide into the water when a faint chuckle escaped him.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I was but thinking what a sturdy pirate you are become."

He withdrew his head before I could answer, and I dropped into the tepid water, with care that there should be no splash.



An instant later Peter was beside me, and we began to swim with long, slow strokes in the direction of the blobs of light which were the only indication of the *Walrus,* so impalpable was the texture of that breathless night. There was not even a star in the sky—and the sky itself was invisible.

The hull of the pirate ship did not take shape until we were under the sheer of the stern. A single, guttering lanthorn seemed to burn in the main cabin, which was tenantless. And we paralleled the sta'b'd side, attracted by a hum of voices for'ard.

Peter's hand on my shoulder detained me as we swam beneath the heel of the bowsprit.

"Here you climb oop," he breathed in my ear. "They are all on der deck. I t'ink dey smoke der pipe in council, *ja!*"

I trod water, and explored with both arms above my head.

"There's no rope within reach," I told him.

"Dot's all right. I lift you."

He was clutching the cutwater with both hands and bracing his feet against the swell of the bow.

"Come on," he urged. "Oop on to my shoulders. I hold you, *ja*."

"But if we splash?"

"We don't splash. You go oop; I go down under der water. Dot's all."

I forged alongside of him and gingerly climbed his immense shoulders, using a grip on his hair for haulage. Then I reached overhead again, and this time got my hands upon a stay of the bowsprit which ran from midway of the spar to a turnbuckle on the bow.

"Steady," I whispered. "I'm going to jump."

"*Ja!*"

I threw my legs upward and twined them around the stay, hanging like a monkey from it, and Peter went under with a gurgling ripple which might have been made by a fish. Presently he came to the surface and swam beneath me.

"Can you climb, Bob?"

"I think so."

"Goodt! I waidt."

THE stay was fortunately dry—had it been slippery-wet I could never have swarmed it—and I was able, after much effort, to secure a grip on the bowsprit and lift myself astraddle of it. From here ordinarily the deck should have been visible, but in that intense darkness I could see no more than a vague loom of spars and a blurr of light in the waist. The hum of voices was more audible, but still indistinct.

I worked down the bowsprit to the lift of the bows; but still I could see nothing, even on the fo'csle. 'Twas plain, however, that here was no watch to fear, and I dropped to the deck and crawled aft on my hands and knees toward the hum of talk, which I made certain now came from the waist.

The fo'csle was littered with spare cables, water-casks and other sailor's truck, which I had to avoid displacing; but I had my reward, for as I advanced the hum of voices dissolved into words and phrases.

—"a foxy 'un, Murray is," said a seaman's voice.

"And they *James* fellers'll fight us, whatever 'ee say," added a second.

"O' course they will!"

This was Silver's unmistakable oily speech.

"Who wouldn't fight for the grandest fortune as any gentlemen adventurers ever had a chance at?"

I wriggled behind a chase-gun, and peered over its breach into the waist. Two battle-lanthorns were suspended from the main-yard, and their yellow glare revealed the *Walrus'* crew squatted in serried ranks around the butt of the mainmast, where Flint, Bones, Silver and several others sat on upturned rum-barrels.

Flint leaned forward, wrathfully insistent, at this moment.

"Gut me if I thought to find such skulkers in my crew!" he snarled. "D'ye think to take any prize wi'out loss?"

"Aye," said a third seaman doggedly, "but we ha' never yet fought wi' Murray. Them as does don't ha' luck."

A murmur of assent answered him.

"Ah," struck in Silver, "but there's a first time always, mates. Murray's like the rest o' us. A ball or a cutlass-edge will finish him. And I say again, who wouldn't risk death for more'n a million and a half o' pounds in good gold and hard silver as'll buy every man jack o' us such pleasures as few men ever comes by, mates?"

"But there's only as much aboard the *James* as we ha' here," objected one of the first speakers.

"True for you Tom Allardyce," said Flint. "But the rest's safe enough, ain't it?"

"There's only them few knows o' it," returned the man. "They said on the *James* there was but the three men and the girl was landed to bury it."

Flint's answering laugh was horrible.

"And d'ye think that out o' four people, not countin' Murray—and one o' the four a girl—we can't make one talk? I tell ye, Tom, the stuff is as good as divided."

"Ye ha' first to catch Murray," retorted Allardyce.

"And why won't we?" demanded Silver. "Didn't we take what he was ready to give us and thank him for it like blessed lambs? And if he does suspect, what good'll it do him? On a night like this he'll never know where we are until we're on him. Two good broadsides, and then we'll sweep his decks."

"Nobody spoke for a time.

"When does the ebb make?" asked Flint with a stretch and a yawn.

"Another two glasses yet," said Bones.

"——, I must ha' a bit of sleep," growled the pirates' captain. "Come to a vote, lads, and be done wi' it. Will ye go or won't ye? Ye all know what mercy Murray'll give ye, if he ever hears o' this council—and there's them as would like to blab, be sure o' that."

Silver pulled himself erect, cuddling his crutch under his arm.

"Quartermaster speaks for the crew," he said. "And my view is as how the crew is for fightin' for their just rights. The *Walrus* has played second fiddle long enough, and here's a chance as isn't likely to come again."

There was a second brief interval of silence.

"Nobody contrary," announced the one-legged man cheerfully. "Council's over! Keep quiet, mates. No drinkin', no fightin'. There'll be plenty o' both later."

The squatting ranks broke up into groups, and a number of men strolled for'ard toward my hiding-place. But I did not await them. From the shelter of the chase-gun I hunched myself back behind a water-cask, and so regained the bows, slipped overside and slid down the anchor-cable to the water.

A huge white shape floated up to me.

"Is dot you, Bob?"

"Yes. They're for attacking the *James* when the tide turns."

He headed down-stream without a word. We were half-way to the *James* before he spoke.

"Dot Murray, he is a lucky feller. Always he gets what he wants."

"What does he want?" I panted.

"Now he gets rid of Flint andt der *Walrus* crew, *ja*."

"But he'll lose their half of the treasure if——"

"Maybe; maybe he don't. Andt after dot he gets rid of der *James*."

"You're crazy, Peter," I said indignantly, trying my best to keep pace with him. "He'd be stranded here."

"Oh, he don't do dot here—maybe he don't do dot at all; maybe der tdefil stops helping him, *ja*. But if he gets der chance, you watch him, Bob. He gets rid of der *James*, and maybe he gets rid of us, *ja*."

"Well, why do we help him, then?" I snapped, recalling my great-uncle's parting gibe.

"Dot's where he is smart, Bob. He makes it so we got to help him to safe our own skins, *ja*. Andt der little gal, too. For him and der Irisher dot drinks like a Lenape squaw I ain't got no use. But you andt der little gal—dot's different."

"Do you mean he intends to sacrifice all of us? And carry away the whole treasure for himself?"

"I don't know, Bob. Murray, he is a funny feller. Very funny! He likes you. He likes der little gal. Maybe he likes me—I don't know. Andt he is honest about dot oldt king dot lifs in Rome. But if any of us come in his way, he would push us aside. Dot's him now!"

The stern of the *Royal James* rose before us, and in one of the open windows my great-uncle's fine white head showed like a faded picture in a frame seen across a darkened room.

"Once before he planned too big," Peter whispered on. "Maybe this time *Gott* speaks loud to der tdefil andt stops him."

My great-uncle's voice floated down, quietly distinct.

"They are gone overlong. Gadzooks, *chevalier*, if they do not shortly return I'll slip my cable and take advantage of what remains of the flood to come at the *Walrus* and finish matters off-hand."

O'Donnell's reply was simply a querulous echo from the interior of the cabin.

"That sounds as though he had some use for us," I murmured to Peter, noiselessly treading water beside me.

"*Ja*. Use he has for us. Maybe he needs us when he gets rid of der *James*, eh? If der tdefil fails him, he can have use for honest men, Bob."

"We'll soon know," I retorted, and twitched the rope which dangled by the rudder-post.

"Who is there?" challenged my great-uncle, instantly alert.

"Robert," I whispered back, and commenced to climb.

Both Murray and O'Donnell—the latter for the time being stirred out of his habitual gloom—assisted me over the window-sill, and it affected me oddly to note my great-uncle's unconcern for the water I dripped on his silken coat.

'You ha' suffered no hurt?" he asked eagerly.

"No, no," I answered. "Make haste to help Peter up. They are coming against us with the making of the ebb."

He was betwixt me and the window, and I could see the faint smile of satisfaction on his face.

"'Tis what was to be expected of them," he remarked. "We must improve our watch. 'Tis no compliment to our people that they failed to suspect aught of your going and coming."

Peter squattered into the cabin like an enormous toad.

"Oof!" he squeaked. "I haf bubbles under my skin. We haf a fight tonight, Murray, *ja?*"

"Thanks to you and Robert, friend Peter, 'twill be rather in the nature of a chastisement than a fight," he answered urbanely. "If you will pardon me, gentlemen, I will go and complete the necessary arrangements."

A tinkle of glass told me that O'Donnell was refilling his goblet.

"What's a fight to the likes of him?" muttered the Irishman dolefully. "Treachery and scheming and murdering, aye, it's a fine night for such! Oh, blessed saints, where'll we be this time the morrow?"

"Safe beyond question," I sought to encourage him as I drew on my breeches. "'Tis never the *Walrus'* scaly crew will overcome us."

"Be not too sure, Master Ormerod," he retorted with unusual vehemence. "I am thinking there is the curse of high Heaven on this venture and all connected with it."

Nevertheless he buckled on his sword and accompanied us to the deck when we were dressed. Men were scurrying silently to and fro, and from an open hatch came the whine of tackle as a piece was shifted on the gundeck. Aloft, squads of topmen were unfurling shreds of canvas to give the *James* steerage way at need. On the poop my great-uncle was issuing his final orders to Martin, Saunders and Coupeau.

"You, Saunders," he said, "will stand by the anchor-cable with a broad-ax and upon my giving the word hew it asunder. Your position, Martin, will be in the waist. Keep men on the fore and main yards, ready to make sail when the cable is cut. Coupeau, of you I expect an initial broadside of crushing effect and a second fire if circumstances permit. Now to your stations, and above all things instruct your men to preserve silence. The man who makes a noise I will blow from a gun forthwith, and let that be my declaration to Flint!"

The officers gave their acknowledgments and flitted away. Simultaneously Peter pointed up the inlet.

"See!" he exclaimed.

The *Walrus'* riding-light winked out. An interval of minutes, and one of the waist-lights followed it. Another interval, and she disappeared completely in the black maw of the night.

My great-uncle sneezed delicately.

"In the dark one is clumsy," he observed. "I fear I have abused my nose with an overheavy dose of Rip-Rap. Well, well! Perhaps there is a parable in the incident for such clever fellows as Captain Flint.

"I must ask you not to move about, gentlemen. We have the better part of a glass to wait for the ebb, but caution is our watchword."

CHAPTER XVII

THE STORM

WE HEARD the *Walrus* before we had sight of her—the slatting of a headsail, a rattling block, a vague creak of cordage. Then an impression of a mighty shadow, a towering spiderweb of spars and lacy rigging, stealing ghostlike from the enshrouding dark.

She floated nearer. Nearer still. And nearer. It seemed that the two vessels must collide, and the suspense became unbearable. I wondered at my great-uncle's restraint. Would he never— I gasped with relief as his cool, even tones clove the silence.

"Touch off, Coupeau."

Crash! The deck leaped underfoot; the anchored hull surged forward. A red sheet of flame girdled the *James'* side, and in the instant's glare the *Walrus* was revealed in stark detail against a setting of glittering, black water and low, forested shores. I saw a man in her foretop, aimlessly balancing a grenade. I saw men staring curiously from the gunports as our broadside smashed into them. I had a glimpse of the brutal face of Bones, peering over the bulwarks, a cutlas in his teeth.

The darkness returned, and a multitude of echoes dinned back and forth across the inlet. There was a rending and cracking of timbers, with such screams as I never hope to hear again, the screams of wicked men who face an unexpected death, oaths and blasphemy and piteous appeals, all blended into one terrible, heart-searching whole.

My great-uncle's level voice dominated the confusion as easily as it had the silence.

"Cut your cable, Saunders!"

Flint's bellow answered from the *Walrus*.

"Give it to 'em, ye cowardly swabs! Stand to your guns!"

The red tongues of the *Walrus'* guns licked out at us; the staggering roar of their discharge smote the night. The fabric of the *Royal James* quivered and shook as the iron hail lashed into her. A moaning and screeching rose from waist, fo'csle and gundeck:

"Oh, ——!"

"My leg! My leg!"

"It hurts! Sweet ——, how it——"

"They're out! My guts are a-runnin' out!"

"Where's my arm? Oh, ——, where's my arm?"

But a third time my great-uncle mastered the uproar.

"Make sail, Martin!"

Coupeau had reloaded his guns, and the *James* fired a second broadside with the same crushing unanimity as before. The *Walrus* receded as if our fire had had the effect of physically repelling her from us. Clouds of smoke came between the ships, and I perceived that we were benefiting from the severing of the anchor-cable. The ebb tide was already sweeping us down the anchorage toward the open sea.

The *Walrus* shot off another ragged broadside, which for the most part splashed water or scattered mud, and then settled to a pegging chase, the Long Toms on her fo'csle barking fitfully as they tossed the twelve-pound shot athwart our decks. Our guns were silent. Our gundeck spewed forth men, whom Martin hustled to the yards to shake out every sail to catch the errant wind that veered gustily from southeast to southwest.

Colonel O'Donnell waved his fist at my great-uncle.

"What madness will have taken ye now, Murray?" he cried. "There was the grand chance ye had to finish the rascals once and for all. Are ye feared of them that ye turn tail—you that ha' struck first blow; aye, and second, too?"

"Not at all, sir," rejoined my great-uncle. "Having struck first blow and second blow, as you so aptly phrase it, I am of a mind to strike also the *coup de grace*. And this with as trifling damage to my own vessel as is possible."

"Man, you'll never have another such chance as that ye just cast away," mourned the Irishman.

"For a soldier, *chevalier*, you reveal astonishing lack of judgment," returned my great-uncle. "Had I remained to finish conclusions with Captain Flint in the narrow space of the anchorage I might conceivably have gained the victory, but it must have been by means of subordinating brains to brawn, and with loss in proportion thereto. I prefer to force him to sea, where, by maneuvering and proper strategy, I can secure the same object at a half or a third of the cost."

"'Tis all the same," retorted O'Donnell. "If ye sink him, ye lose his treasure."

"Quite true," assented Murray. "But what would you say to driving him ashore, eh?"

What O'Donnell would have answered to this I know not; for there was a sudden drumming of feet on the deck, and Moira cast herself into his arms.

"Oh, *padre*," she cried tearfully, "and are ye safe from the cannon? I waked in my bed with their roaring, and it came over me we were on the *Santissima Trinidad* once more, and poor Señor Nunez, the apothecary, groaning from his death-wound—and him that was looking forward to the quiet end of his days in the little house by Alcantara!

"And then I was thinking 'twas all a horrid dream. But the cannon blatted again, and the ship trembled, and there was a shriek at my very door. So out I ran in my shift, and Pomp the blackamoor was lying in his blood on the cabin floor, and Ben Gunn beside him a-praying. And with that I put on me enough clothing for decency's sake, and came to find ye, for my four bones are clattering with fear, and that's Heaven's truth!"

O'Donnell drew her close.

"There, there, *acushla*," he said with a tenderness he had only for her. "The worst will be over. There's naught for ye to fear."

She reached up and stroked his face.

"Troth, and I was thinking that same if I could but come at you, *padre*," says she.

"But 'tis terrible fearsome to be sleeping by your lone self, and awake in the midst of a sea-fight."

Her father swore under his breath.

"Ah, 'tis I was the weak, foolish fellow to drag you into such a venture! There'll come a day I must answer——"

She stopped his mouth with her hand.

"As if I'd be anywhere else than just here!"

I turned my head, not wishing to be prying into their affairs, and a quarter-mile astern I saw a jet of flame and heard the smacking report of one of the *Walrus'* chase-guns.

Moira said something more that I did not hear, and he interrupted her.

"Get ye below, my maid, until we——"

There was a harsh, whistling sound in the air, and the hairs on one side of my head rose up, and on the heels of this came the thud of a shot as it struck timber.

"Close, egad!" commented my great-uncle.

O'Donnell swayed strangely and drooped over his daughter's shoulder.

"*Padre!*" The dazed grief in her voice was tragical. "Why won't ye stand? Are ye hit? Oh, blessed Virgin, there's no sense left in him! Bob, Master Peter, help me! He's so—so—heavy."

Peter and I jumped to aid her, and Murray was not far behind us. We lowered O'Donnell's tall body to the deck, and I ran for a lanthorn. When I returned with it my great-uncle had assumed command of the situation.

"We can feel no blood or broken bones," he said. "Hold your light here by his head if you please, Robert."

The yellow glow played over the Irishman's long face. His lips were drawn back in what had been a smile; his eyes were fixed and glassy; no pulse beat in his corded throat. Moira crouched beside him, chafing his limp hands and crooning a medley of endearments in English, Irish and Spanish. Murray, opposite her, thrust exploring fingers into the bosom of her father's shirt. A startled look appeared in my great-uncle's lambent eyes, but his features preserved their immobility.

" 'Tis useless to cry to him, lass," he said gently. "He doth not answer, you see."

"But he will!" she protested. "Sure, ye must soon be finding what is wrong with him, sir. It may be a sup of brandy would bring him round."

My great-uncle reached across and plucked from her grasp the hand she had been rubbing.

"Come," he said, rising, "we will ask Peter to carry him to his berth, shall we?"

"But—but—we must bring him to!"

"We can not bring him to," he answered kindly.

She stood up, bewildered.

"Not—bring—him—to? But why?"

"Because his heart no longer beats," said my great-uncle. "Quick! Catch her, Robert."

She lay like a tired child in my arms.

"Dead!" she murmured faintly.

"He can not be dead!" I exclaimed. "There's not a wound on him."

"*Neen,*" said Peter.

He picked up the lanthorn from where I had dropped it on the deck and directed the light upon the upper part of Colonel O'Donnell's head. A blue bruise like a scar was spread across the Irishman's left temple.

"A graze-shot," pronounced Peter. "Der cannonball came dot close. *Ja!*"

"But the skin is not even broken," I objected.

"*Ja*, but dot don't matter."

Murray bent over and fingered the bruise.

"Peter is right," he said. " 'Twas the concussion affected the brain. I have heard of such a freak shot, but never seen it happen before."

Moira clung to my arms.

"And he is really dead? The *padre* is really dead? And he unshriven, without a comfort of the Church! Oh, holy saints, be his advocates! Sure, was there ever a crueler end?"

She collapsed in a passion of weeping.

"Conduct her below, Robert," said my great-uncle. "We will follow you."

She suffered me to lead her from the poop without objection, more like a child than ever, sobbing and protesting and repeating the same things over and over again, in an abandonment of grief which only the Irish can attain.

" 'Tis you are the kind friend," she stammered when we had reached her stateroom. "And oh, Bob, I have the sore need of you, I that am an orphan in a pirate ship. Troth, I haven't a friend in the wide world unless it be you and Master Corlaer. But I am the bad, selfish girl to be thinking of my own plight, and the father that loved me this moment gone up to Peter's Gate, and him without the holy wafer to his lips or so much as a prayer said over him. Ah, what ill deed did we do, either one of us, that he should be taken from me so, without a word of parting? The sisters were always after saying we must reconcile ourselves to God's mercy, but 'tis little mercy has been shown to me."

I quieted her at last, brought her a swallow of brandy and induced her to lie down.

"I mustn't be crying the way I will have done," she apologized, gulping her sobs. "Himself will be needing all the prayers I can say, and a boiling of candles, too. Do you go on, Bob—only promise you'll not leave me by my lone if there's more fighting. I could never stand to hear the thundering of the cannon after—after—*that*—and no one by to bid me take heart o' grace."

[illegible] THE gray dawnlight was seeping through the stern windows when I rejoined my great-uncle and Peter in the main cabin. Peter was as placid as ever, puffing industriously at a long clay pipe; but my relative displayed more concern than I remembered to have observed in him at any time in the past.

"I trust you were able to calm the poor lass?" he greeted me. "Stap me, what a sorry business! I'd never have chosen O'Donnell for a traveling companion, but without him I know not what to do. The whole venture——"

He shook his head and stared out the window beside him, clicking the lid of his snuffbox open and shut.

"But we have first to attend to the *Walrus*," he added presently. "I shall do so with the less reluctance after that last shot. The cursed luck of it! A beaten enemy's blow in the dark, blindfolded, by gad! And to think it must strike down of all men the one most essential to my schemes. I could— Well, well, no matter! We must triumph over the unexpected. 'Tis the chasm all great leaders must cross to win the final victory."

I found myself somehow instinctively hostile to his attitude.

"What have you done with Colonel O'Donnell?" I asked coldly.

"Peter carried him to his stateroom. We will give him decent burial when we return to the island. And perhaps some day we can come for him in state with a squadron of King's ships and bear him home to a grave in the land he was exiled from."

My great-uncle's spirits brightened noticeably as he contemplated the picture his words presented.

"Yes, yes," he murmured half to himself. "What O'Donnell could have done surely I can do. Our friends in Avignon will help. And Robert!"

He turned to me.

"Ah, my boy, this unfortunate incident is my best justification for pressing you in my cause. What should I do without you and Peter? 'Twill be for you two with Mistress Moira to establish our connections with the king's agents in France."

"You seem to forget I am no Jacobite,". I answered unpleasantly.

"Tut, tut, you shall be as stout a Jacobite as Prince Charles himself."

"Not I!"

He smiled.

"We'll leave that to Mistress Moira."

"Maybe you forget der *Walrus*," interposed Peter.

"Not so, Peter. I shall dispose of the *Walrus* within the next few hours."

"Andt *Gott*," added Peter as if Murray had not spoken.

My great-uncle laughed merrily.

"My dear Peter, men of judgment will inform you that there is no God—or, if we concede a God, there is every reason to assign a superior degree of power to the inevitable Devil representing the opposing virtue of godliness. Indeed, did I incline to bow down before any superhuman authority I should elect Satan by preference. But a ripe experience has inclined me to the view that the Devil is as much a figment of men's imaginations as God. Since the beginning of recorded time a priestly caste— But here we are drifting into a philosophical discussion; and as you very properly reminded me, the *Walrus* awaits our attention. Let us go on deck."

"Der wise man don't know eferyt'ing," answered Peter. "*Neen!*"

"Essentially true," agreed my great-uncle. "I must confess myself ignorant of such staple points as why we are here, the excuse for human existence, the relative significance of this world of ours, the utility of the differing qualities of goodness and evil. But any serious consideration, friend Peter, must convince as profound a thinker as yourself that the very existence of men and women is of itself *prima-facie* evidence that there can be no Divine Author of omnipotent or sentient powers."

"We better go on deck," said Peter.

"After you," protested my relative as we rose. " 'Tis a pleasure to debate with you, Peter. Take care, pray! Gunn has not removed all of the evidence of Pompey's passing. Strange, is it not, how a black fellow like Pomp and a man who hath been the confidant of princes like O'Donnell should both be abolished by a simple organic disruption? That alone, Peter, should suffice to disprove the humbug of an all-wise Providence. An all-wise Providence, forsooth! Here am I, arranging to reconstruct for the better a most unhappy trio of kingdoms, with consequences bound to improve the well-being of the entire world, and my plan is suffered to be placed in jeopardy by an ignorant sailor's blind shot in the dark! What could be more absurd?"

Peter did not answer him, and we passed out upon the maindeck, where sailors were busy removing the traces of the *Walrus'* first broadside which had wrought a certain amount of minor damage and caused the deaths of several men. 'Twas now light enough to see about us, but the light was of a quality I had never known before—a hard, coppery glare, with the sun obscured from view. The sea was quite flat, and the wind continued intermittent, veering from one quarter of the south to the other. Spyglass Island lay to port, its contour amazingly distinct—as if it were bitten into the frame of steel-blue sea and dully shimmering sky that encompassed it. The *Walrus*, like the *James*, had cleared Captain Kidd's anchorage, and was running due north before the wind betwixt us and the islet called Skeleton Island.

Murray bent a shrewd eye aloft and hailed Martin.

"How is it you carry no sail on the mizzen?" he demanded.

"Account o' that there last ——— ——— shot, cap'n," answered the mate, tugging his forelock. "If ye look to it ye'll see as how a ——— ——— twelve-pounder bored into her."

We all followed his pointing finger to a gouge beneath the mizzen yard. The shot that had grazed Colonel O'Donnell's head had done more than graze the mizzen. The mast was whittled away to a depth of several inches as cleanly as if a giant's ax had chopped into it.

My great-uncle took snuff very slowly.

"What luck! What luck!" he muttered. And then, louder:

" 'Twas an expensive shot for us, gadzooks! Well, Martin, we must fish the mast at our earliest opportunity, but we can make shift to corner Flint without it. The *Walrus* is foul and heavy in the water. The *James* can sail circles round her in this wind."

There was a worried look in Martin's weather-beaten face.

"Askin' your pardon, sir, I don't like this ——— ——— wind. We're in for a ——— of a storm or I'm a ——— ——— ——— lubber."

My great-uncle shrugged his shoulders.

"Storm or no storm, Martin, the *Walrus* carries nigh four hundred thousand pounds."

"Aye, sir; and by your favor, best sink her and be done wi' it and run for shelter."

"Sink her! Man, we'd lose the treasure."

"Better lose the *Walrus'* treasure than go down ourselves," insisted Martin doggedly. "Have it your own way, sir, but I'm a ——— ——— ——— if it ain't fixin' to blow up one o' these here tarrible Caribbee storms as pluck the hairs outn your head."

Murray regarded the four quarters of the sky for several moments.

"With your prognostications I find no quarrel, Martin," he said finally; "but I believe we have ample time to head the *Walrus*. Flint dares not run south because he knows the hornet's nest we have stirred up in those seas. My purpose is to box him in and force him to beach. If this wind continues we should bring him to book on the north coast of the island, and so soon as the *Walrus* has taken ground we will wear and beat in for the North Inlet. Doth that satisfy you?"

The mate hesitated.

"You be cap'n, sir. But if 'twas my say we'd head back in to the anchorage, *Walrus* or no *Walrus*."

My great-uncle stiffened.

" 'Tis impossible," he replied haughtily. "However, we will bear up for the *Walrus*, and you may bid Coupeau to see what harm he can contrive against her with the port chase-gun."

Martin saluted and went for'ard. My great-uncle led us up to the poop.

"Your old sailor is eke much of an old woman into the bargain," he remarked perfunctorily, climbing the sta'b'd ladder ahead of me. "Let him but sniff the approach of a tempest, and he is all for the nearest haven—aye, the hardiest buccaneer no less than the law-abiding merchantman."

"O'Donnell was right, it seems, when he advised you to finish the task you had begun in the inlet," I snapped, none too pleased myself with the outlook.

"In that case, my dear nephew, a half of us must have perished," retorted my relative. "You have had some experience of these wolves of ours when their lusts are roused. No, no; I am no milk-and-water fighter, but I prefer to batter my enemy safely at long range rather than give him an equal opportunity to tear my throat."

Peter grunted.

"You said?" Murray inquired courteously.

"*Neen*, I saidt not'ings. But I t'ink—I t'ink it is all right if you get der *Walrus* and yourself come safe. If you don't do bot' it don't matter if you do der odder; *neen*."

My great-uncle raised his prospectglass.

"You have ably stated one of the primary rules of success in any branch of warfare, friend Peter," he said. "Captain Flint is making better going of it than I had expected. Apparently by some perversity of our continuing ill-luck he hath a more constant wind close under the island than we out here. Ah! I hear Coupeau's bark."

A cloud of smoke rolled aft as the long eighteen on the port side of the *James'* fo'csle boomed. The shot dashed up a fountain of water a few feet ahead of the *Walrus*, which was now running neck and neck with us. Flint replied with one of his long twelves, but the shot fell short, and he edged away as much as he dared, which was very little, for Murray had seen to it that he had bare sailing-room. Our chase-gun barked again, and this time the round shot ricocheted from the water's surface and slapped into the *Walrus'* hull.

"Neat," commented my great-uncle; "but what we require is a fair hit on a spar."

Coupeau realized as much, as was evidenced by his next two shots going high and striking the water beyond the target. But I was distracted from watching his efforts, for at the fifth discharge Moira O'Donnell crept up the port ladder, her eyes wide with misgiving.

"Troth, yourself promised only a few minutes since you'd not leave me by my lone was there more fighting, Bob," she reproached me.

" 'Tis no fight," I answered.

"Aye, we do but seek to drive yonder knaves ashore," Murray assured her. "They can not reach us at this distance."

She surveyed the scene with a doubting eye and was constrained to credit us.

"But why is the light so strange?" she demanded. " 'Tis as if the door of a cookstove was ajar."

"We are in for bad weather, sweet," replied my great-uncle. "You must go below."

But she shrank away from him and clutched firmly an arm of Peter and me, each.

"No, no, I'll not be going down there again," she cried. "On the inside of a door I can think of naught but the sorrow that is come upon me. I'll stay up here in the open."

"Certes, this will be no safe place in a storm," I urged.

But she clung the tighter to us.

"I'll not go down. I'd sooner be taken by the pirates than go down. Down there the noises of the water and the ship will be like the crying of the banshee in the Green Room where grandfather died. No, no! In the cabin there is only death, and the light is dim, and the noises will be whispering at my elbow the livelong time. I'll have none of it! Sure, I care not what danger there is, if I can stay up here and meet it in the open."

"We let you stay," said Peter soothingly. "*Ja*, we better let der little gal stay, Murray. Bob andt I, we take care of her."

"That will we," I endorsed him.

My great-uncle eyed me a thought quizzically.

"You are, it seems, subject to change of opinion, Robert," he remarked. "By all means let Moira remain with us. I daresay she'll be none the worse for a wetting."

But the storm held off throughout our morning-long chase down the east coast of the island and then out to sea to herd the *Walrus* in from the north. Coupeau hulled the miserable craft again and again, and shot away her foretopmast; but she steadily clawed offshore and made desperate attempts to steal ahead of us and win a clear path before the wind, and when, toward noon, the breeze died completely the positions of the two vessels were practically the same as they had been from the beginning of the cat-and-mouse game that Murray played.

The *Royal James*, by nimbler handling

had gained in the last hour, and was more than a cannon-shot to the northwest of the *Walrus*, with the northernmost of the island's chain of hills—the one the pirates called the Foremast Hill—almost due southeast of us. If the wind sprang up again in anything like the same quarter the *Walrus* was fast in Murray's trap. She would have the choice of two alternatives: She could stand on and fight, with the practical certainty of destruction for all hands, or she could drive ashore, in which case the crew might take to the woods, with every prospect of eluding pursuit, unless Murray made a determined effort to comb the island's craggy recesses. After the long-range battering they had received all morning, on top of the hammering in the action in the dark, there was not much doubt that the *Walrus'* disorderly crew would take the decision into their own hands and choose the latter as offering a fair chance of life, no matter how circumscribed.

THE helmsman had just turned the hour-glass, which lay beside the compass in the hooded box in front of the steering-wheel, when a shout came from Martin, who was half-way up the main-rigging, sweeping the horizon with a glass. My great-uncle had been pondering the desirability of getting out the boats and undertaking to tow the *James* within range of the long eighteens, and he called back—

"Is it wind?"

"Aye, aye, sir," roared Martin—and there was no mildness now in the old fellow's tones. "There's the —— ——est blow o' wind as ever came out o' the —— —— bowels o' the sky or I'm a —— —— swab as ever was."

He tumbled from the ratlines and ran aft to the break of the poop, his face lifted earnestly in appeal.

"Best let me lay an ax to the mizzen, sir," he called.

My great-uncle took snuff, calmly deliberate.

"Curb your fears, Martin," he answered. "I have weathered a lifetime of gales in the *Royal James*. Take in sail, of course; but if we sacrificed a mast needlessly 'twould cripple us for weeks. Where away is this wind?"

Martin waved an arm across the northwestern arc of the horizon.

"Look for yourself, cap'n. I be an old man, and I never seed the like."

Murray's reply was to swarm up the mizzen rigging with the uncanny agility of which he was capable, and I climbed after him. We were some fifty feet above the deck when we saw clearly with the naked eye a vast purple canopy arching forward across the northern sky, a thing of splendidly colorful intensity, savagely beautiful. Jagged streaks of lightning flashed forth from its mirky depths. A tattered fringe of storm-clouds whipped out ahead of it like the tentacles of some monstrous sea-creature. And it advanced at an incredible speed, covering miles of sea and sky in the few moments that we watched it.

My great-uncle's jaw squared grimly.

" 'Tis too late to sacrifice the mizzen," he said. "We'd not have time to clear the wreckage."

His commands rang through the ship.

"Aloft, topmen! Strip her to a storm-jib! Hola, Coupeau! Double-lash your chase-guns and be certain the broadside batteries are secured and the ports closed. Batten all hatches, Saunders!"

'Twas as much as I could do to keep pace with him as he descended to the poop.

"Fetch a coil of light rope, Robert," he ordered briefly. "We shall all require to be lashed fast."

"Shall I carry Moira below?" I asked.

He hesitated.

"No, she will have a better chance——"

He checked himself.

"Let her bide on deck. Here we can aid her at need. Haste, boy! We must have the rope before the wind strikes us."

I slid down a stay to the maindeck and dug the rope out of a chest of spare gear which was bolted to the cabin bulkhead. My great-uncle's last words had impressed me even more than the spectacle of that baleful curtain across the northern sky; and I was thrilled, too, by the tense celerity with which the entire crew leaped to the task of preparing the ship to meet the tempest. There was almost no noise—a few shouts of command and hails of acknowledgment; but every man worked as if his life depended upon it. When the jib-sheet fouled Martin slashed it free with his knife, and the sail came down with a run. By the time I had regained the poop the upper spars already were bare.

Murray was standing with Moira and

Peter beside the helmsman, and while they stared, fascinated, at the oncoming storm, his eyes were upon the *Walrus*.

"Flint must be sober," he said bitterly. "He is taking in sail. Stap me, what a fit end to a luckless day! In the hollow of my hand, and now— Aye, 'twould be all ways fitting did he escape, whilst we——"

A snarling moan, as of great winds tortured and confused, came to us from the belly of the storm. The sky darkened. A gust of air, sulfurous and warm, ruffled my hair. The moan became a howl, a clamor.

My great-uncle snatched the clasp-knife from the belt of the helmsman, a splay-footed Easterling, whose flat, gap-toothed face had remained impassive during all the excitement since Martin's warning shout had announced the storm's approach.

"Give me that rope, Robert," he exclaimed. "I am a fool to stand talking. Here, Peter!"

He flung the Dutchman a length of it.

"Bind Mistress Moira to those ringbolts—and best knot her to yourself as well. She'll not be able to stand alone. Aid me with this fellow here, Robert. We must tie him to the wheel."

One of the clouds in advance of the storm curtain reached out over us with a crackle of thunder-bolts and spatter of rain, and our fingers flew as we secured first the helmsman and then ourselves. The voice of the tempest was become a sullen, animal roar, riven at intervals by the crash of the lightning. And the immense curtain of its front overhung the *James*, impenetrably sooty at the base, opaquely purple as it toppled forward. The *Walrus* was a specter ship to leeward, and disappeared in the gloom as I watched.

"Oh, holy Mother!" gasped Moira. "'Twill be the end of all things."

And so it seemed. The *Walrus* was gone. The northern coast of the island dimmed and vanished. For an instant the peak of Foremast Hill hung in the upper air. Then that, too, was blotted out. The purple twilight deepened. Rain sheeted down from clouds scarce higher than our mast-heads. A lurid glare of lightning flickered and was quenched in the sea. And the wind smote us with a mad howl of exultation, sucking up into its embrace everything that was not fastened to the deck.

The *James* shuddered under the blow, bearing down by the head and heeling to starboard. My great-uncle and I were pushed forward on our faces. The helmsman was doubled over the wheel. Peter bent to cover Moira, crouching above her on hands and knees.

Presently the ship righted herself; but as she neared an even keel there was a prolonged *craa-aa-ack!* of breaking wood, and the wounded mizzenmast went by the board, crushing a score of men in its fall and brushing as many more through the hole it stove in the starboard bulwarks.

A wail of agony pierced thinly the tumult of the storm, and the *James* was jarred from end to end as the big spar, with all its litter of yards and top-hamper, lunged at the hull like a trip-hammer, its dead weight dragging us broadside on into the path of the waves which followed the wind's first irresistible rush. Steep walls of water dropped on us from as high as the mainyard, thudding hollow on poop and fo'csle. Giant combers crowded so fast that we choked beneath their deluge. The waist was a lather of creamy seas that wrenched and battered at hatch-coamings and bulwarks.

Murray staggered to his feet and set his lips to my ear.

"Must—cut—free—mizzen—breach—hull——"

So much I understood, and assisted him to slash the rope which bound us to the deck. Peter saw what we were up to and loosed himself, taking care in his deliberate fashion to strengthen the lashings which secured Moira under the lee of the port bulwarks. Then the three of us fought our way down into the hell-reek of the waist, where small boats and water-butts and dead men swirled fore and aft in a torrent of pounding seas.

There were axes in the box from which I had procured the rope, and we equipped ourselves with them, waded thigh deep through the tangle of water and wreckage and attached the maze of stays and rigging that united the dangling mizzenmast to the ship. Not a man helped us. There was not a living man in sight aft of the mainmast, and it was as much as a man's life was worth to try to work aft of that point, for on the one side there was a wide breach in the bulwarks through which the waves poured, and opposite was the gap the mizzenmast had crushed. Whoever crossed the deck there must have been carried overboard, one way or the other.

Where we were we had some slight shelter from the poop and an undamaged stretch of the port bulwarks, but 'twas sufficiently hazardous in all conscience. I can see my great-uncle still in his black silk coat and breeches, all adrip with the salt water as he labored with the energy of a man of half his age, always swift to perceive the strategic center of the tangle, always first to wade into the tricky web of cordage where a misstep meant a plunge overside.

Twice Peter rescued him from certain death, and once the Dutchman saved me when a mountainous sea curled down upon us over the *James'* port side and was like to have carried me off in its passing. And it was Peter whose brute strength and coolheadedness made the most of my great-uncle's agility of wit, and hewed and hacked the mizzenmast from its moorings. Aye, and none too soon; for when we clambered back on the poop Moira met us with hands clasped in terror and pointed to leeward where a rocky headland loomed through the gray rain.

Murray gave it one look and leaped for the wheel. The Easterling was bent over in the odd, huddled posture he had assumed from the moment the storm hit us, and he lolled sidewise as my great-uncle grasped his shoulder, his body all askew from the small of his back upward. He made no response, and slipped lower in the coils of rope that bound him to his post; his gnarled fingers slid off the spokes; his feet went out from under him.

"His back is broken," shouted my great-uncle.

The *James* had begun to gather headway; but as the wheel was released from the dead helmsman's grip her head fell off, and she dropped sluggishly into the trough of the seas which surged over the shattered waist, and one green hill of water burst squarely on the poop, hurling us to the deck. Peter recovered his footing before either Murray or I, shoved the Easterling's body aside and gripped the wheel in his own hands. Slowly, the buoyancy all out of her, the *Royal James* swung around in response to the rudder's thrust and lumbered off before the wind.

The headland Moira had sighted faded into the mist; but my great-uncle shook his head sadly.

"We are making water," he shouted to me; "and the island is to leeward. We scarce can weather it, and if we do——"

A faint hail reached us from the fo'csle.

"Land——"

And a rent in the storm-clouds showed a second and lower headland fair over our port bow.

Peter started to put the helm down to enable us to bear off as much as possible and have whatever chance there was of clearing it; but Murray caught his arm.

"No, no, Peter!" cried my great-uncle. "Head up! Head up! 'Tis the North Inlet! If we can pass in to sta'b'd of that spit we are safe."

"*Ja*," squeaked Peter, and his iron muscles forced the rudder over until it neutralized the drive of the wind and sea to port; and foot by foot the *Royal James* made her southing, passed the east spit with half a cable's length to spare and opened a narrow, bottle-shaped roadstead, with tree-clad shores that offered protection from any storm that blew.

The rain was still pelting down. The surf was foaming on the outer beaches; and wind whistled shrilly in the rigging. But to us that prospect was the fairest ever seen. Moira sank to her knees in prayer beside the dead pirate. My great-uncle stepped to the rail and bade the survivors of the crew get sufficient sail on the ship to give us steerage way. And I—I tried to shake Peter. He blinked at me solemnly.

"I t'ink *Gott* spoke out loudt to der tdefil today, Bob," he said. "*Ja!*"

CHAPTER XVIII

DISASTER

ANOTHER less self-assured than Andrew Murray must have been dismayed by the series of misfortunes which had beset him. We were safe, but no more. The *Royal James* was taking in water so rapidly 'twas necessary to beach her on the mud-flats at the south end of the inlet. She leaked like a sieve where the mizzenmast had thumped her side, and her upper works were in splinters. In the fight with the *Walrus* and the storm we had lost eighty-odd men, but more serious than this were the deaths of the two mates. Martin's body was found near the stump of the mizzen; he had been struck down by the mast he so distrusted. Nothing was ever seen of Saunders, and we could only suppose that he had been swept overboard.

The crew were apathetic and sullen, inclined to be mutinous and resentful of my great-uncle's authority. For the first time they had reason to question his omnipotence, and it required a full display of his ruthless temper to reduce them to subjection—an accomplishment to which he was aided considerably by Coupeau, and I am free to admit, by Peter and me, who could not afford to risk the brutal license which would certainly follow a successful revolt of the gundeck's polyglot horde. The former galley slave was a redoubtable ally with the nine-tailed cat, and a bruiser whose fists were as deadly sure as the long eighteens he handled so deftly.

The rain and wind ceased with the approach of darkness, and my great-uncle had the men mustered under the poop, many of them still bleeding from the punishment they had received. And of all his feats I deem that the most remarkable: To face, practically unaided, upward of a hundred and fifty men, who had just been curbed in the act of mutiny, without even sufficient light to enable him to exploit the compelling gleam of his tawny eyes. He beat them down—and held them down—by sheer power of will and utter fearlessness.

"You stand upon the deck of a wrecked ship," he said bleakly. "Under hatches lies sufficient treasure to make every one of you comfortable for life, to buy you dissipation or place or fortune, whichever you prefer. One man can lead you to repair the ship and conduct you where the treasure will be of use to you.

"I am that man. Without me you are doomed to spend your days chasing the goats on those hills; and if there is any repetition of the disorder exhibited today I shall maroon all of you save a number required to handle the ship.

"Get to work. Before you rest I expect the maindeck to be cleared and stagings rigged overside for resheathing and calking."

He drove them until midnight, then sent them reeling to their hammocks.

In the morning a systematic plan of occupation was arranged. By Coupeau's advice a handful of the more amenable of the crew—mostly negroes, Portuguese, Italians and Frenchmen of the south—were organized as an after-guard, and the remainder were divided into squads headed by men selected for skill at some special trade. One squad were to overhaul the sails and cut and sew from spare canvas a suit for the new mizzen, which a second squad were to hew on the slopes of Spyglass Mountain and transport to the ship. A third squad were to repair all exterior damage to the hull; a fourth were to recalk the started seams; a fifth were to attend to whatever internal repairs were necessary.

Coupeau was placed in charge of the work aboardship, and the rest of us carried Colonel O'Donnell's body to the top of a small hill east of the head of the inlet. There, in the midst of a grove of pines, we laid him to rest. 'Twas a noble situation for a wanderer who had never reached his goal, with the clashing boughs and the distant thunder of the surf to sound a requiem until the end of time and a view over green meadows and dwarf woodlands to the white rim of the beach and the blue sea, shining in the warm sun.

Yesterday seemed years past. I blinked my eyes, looking from the peaceful garb of nature to Moira's slim body huddled in prayer beside the mound of raw earth amongst the pine needles. On the edge of the grove the men who had dug the grave were playing a gambling game with the pine-cones. Peter leaned on a musket, gravely compassionate. My great-uncle, his eyes puckered in thought, was staring out to sea. As I watched, he twitched my coat sleeve and drew me to one side.

"I shall leave you to amuse yourself as you choose for the remainder of the day," he said. " 'Tis for you and Peter to safeguard the maid. I must ascertain if possible, what hath become of Flint."

"And then?" I asked.

"Then?" His eyebrows arched in surprize. "Why, then, Robert, we shall continue as we have done hitherto."

"You must pursue this insane scheme?"

He was as patient with me as if I were a fractious child.

" 'Tis no 'insane scheme,' but a coup of high politics of fascinating import, my boy. I own to disappointment it doth not appeal to you more readily. What? Shall we cry quits, simply because of shipwreck? And after every move hath turned as we plotted it should!"

I shook my head hopelessly, but decided to try again.

"Bethink you," I argued, "the longboat can speedily be made weather tight. In her we might reach——"

"Put it from your mind," he interrupted with a hint of iron in his voice. "You little know me, Robert, if you reckon me one to turn back from what I have begun—in especial, this matter which consummates the ambition of my life."

"But we——"

This time the iron was uppermost.

"Boy, you are essential to my plans. Much as I love you, I— But we'll not talk on that plane. I am none for threats. Let it suffice that you are not to mention the subject again."

He wheeled around and left me, and with his escort of tarry-breeks strung out behind him was soon buried in the undergrowth on the lower flanks of the hill.

The sun was past meridian when Peter and I induced Moira to abandon the unmarked mound, and to divert her mind we led her on a tramp to the shoulders of the Spyglass, where a score of the *James'* men already had felled a giant fir and were lopping the branches from the trunk preparatory to removing the bark. In the forest near by we killed a mess of birds, and Peter skilfully broiled them over an open fire, and after that, since she professed to enjoy the silence of the mountainside, we pressed on, beyond hearing of the ringing ax-blades, and finally came to the foot of the steep pinnacle of rock which was the lens of the Spyglass.

Here we would have halted, but Moira had heard the story of the watch the pirates maintained from the summit, and she insisted on completing the ascent, despite the lateness of the hour. And we, because we were for doing anything that would please her that day and relieve her grief, consented.

It was more difficult than it looked, and the sun was low in the west when we reached the platform at the top, stained and blackened by the beacon fires that had burned there. But the view was glorious. The island was spread out beneath us like a map on a table, from the Foremast Hill on our left all the way southward along the rocky spine of the west coast to Mizzenmast Hill and a cape to the west of that which old Martin had called Haulbowline Head. Eastward the irregular shore ran north and south to the indentation of Captain Kidd's anchorage, the tree growth matted and thick except for several savannas midway of the island and the silvery loops of two or three small rivers.

We identified the masts of the *James*, rising above the headwaters of the North Inlet, and the opening in the trees north and east of Captain Kidd's anchorage that was the site of the fort Flint had built. And then Moira cried out:

"Oh, blessed saints, will that be a ship? Do but see, Bob! Peter!"

She pointed eastward; and there sure enough was a ship, or rather, the tops'ls of a ship barely lifting over the horizon's rim. If it had not been for the fact that the sun's rays were striking level across the ocean floor, and so were reflected from the sheen of the canvas, we should never have seen it, not even with a glass.

"Aye, 'tis a ship," I said.

"*Ja*," nodded Peter. "It is Flint."

Moira shivered.

"Troth, and who would it be else?" she demanded. "There'll be no friends of us come a-calling, I'm thinking."

"It might be a King's ship—" I began.

"No, then," she denied, "if this island is gone all these years without the King's ships finding track of it, 'tis not like they will come upon it sudden in this moment."

"'Tis a ship indeed," I agreed unwillingly. "Aye, a full-rigged ship."

"*Ja*, a ship like Flint's," said Peter.

We were silent for an instant, the three of us, dazed by the suddenness with which our whole outlook on the future had been changed by this unexpected loom of tops'ls leagues away.

"He must have weathered the storm," I said foolishly.

"And now the red fighting will begin all over again," cried Moira. "My soul, will there not have been deaths enough for this treasure? Every piece of it must be specked with men's blood."

"We better tell Murray," said Peter, moving toward the lip of the rock platform.

"But how could Flint be back so soon?" I protested. "'Tis impossible, Peter. He could not——"

"He could, *ja*," returned the Dutchman imperturbably. "Der storm was by in two glasses—andt der ship is yet maybe ten leagues off, *neen?*"

WE DESCENDED the Spyglass in silence. Twilight overtook us in the forest at its base, and we were obliged to retrace our course with extreme caution, so that eight bells rang from the *Royal*

James—so exact was the restored discipline on that stranded hulk—as we stepped from the trees on to the shore of the North Inlet and hailed for a boat.

My great-uncle met us at the gangway, immaculate in plum satin coat and blue plush breeches, white silk stockings and black pumps, silver-buckled, his hair neatly tied with a black silk ribbon.

"Well, well," he greeted us, "you have made a long day of it. I trust you are not overtired, sweet?"

This to Moira.

"I have delayed sitting to dinner in hopes that you would be here. You can see—" he waved an all-inclusive hand—"that we have not been idle aboard the *James*. We begin to look like a ship again, eh? Did you by chance see the new mizzen?"

"You better come to der cabin," said Peter abruptly.

"I beg your pardon?" answered Murray.

"We have something to tell you," I said. "It can not wait."

His eyes plumbed mine, and I think he knew in that instant what our news was. He clicked open his snuff-box and dusted a pinch delicately into his nostrils.

"So?" he murmured. "Sets the wind in that quarter!"

And he offered Moira his arm with the fine, stately dignity he achieved to perfection, and led the way aft to the main cabin.

"You may place the viands upon the table, Gunn," he said to the steward when we were seated. "We will serve ourselves."

He turned to Moira.

"I recommend this fish. 'Tis fresh-caught, and Scipio—" the remaining blackamoor—"is a master at such dishes; he hath stuffed it, you see, with greens he procured from the woods."

"We have scant time to eat, let alone to admire our food," I interposed roughly. "From the peak of the Spyglass at sunset we sighted the tops'ls of a ship in the east."

"I presume that you believe her to be the *Walrus?*" he returned.

"*Ja*," said Peter. "It is Flint."

"My faith, and who else would it?" asked Moira.

"Doubtless you are right," he assented. "Indeed, I do not question it. Our examination of the northern and eastern beaches today failed to disclose a trace of evidence to indicate what had become of the *Walrus*, and had she sunk some wreckage must have washed ashore. Yes, yes, my friends, our ill-luck is still with us. Flint rode out the storm. But that, Robert, is no reason why we should not secure the maximum of satisfaction from this tasty meal—all the more particularly so when we consider 'tis like to be the last for some days we shall eat in such comfortable surroundings."

"You take it coolly!" I exclaimed.

"And why not? 'Tis a disaster, I grant you, yet irritation will not aid me to redress it."

"You don't stay here, *neen?*" said Peter.

"Quite right, friend Peter. The *Royal James* in her present plight would be a death-trap. I shall abandon her tonight and shift to the fort Flint was so obliging as to construct for us by the anchorage."

"And the treasure?" I asked.

He held up his wineglass to the light and studied it reflectively.

"Obviously, we must be where the treasure is," he returned at length. "Or, if you please, put it the other way round: The treasure must be where we are. I foresee a busy night for our people."

Moira thrust out appealing hands toward him.

"Oh, sir, why won't ye just be after calling out to this ship when she comes and bid them take what they will and go? Sure, that would be better than——"

"Tut, tut," he rebuked her. "A part of this treasure is to supplement the eight hundred thousand pounds intended for your father's friends—and they, my lass, are King James' friends. You are a good Jacobite, I trust, and would not see our Cause deprived of a single doubloon that might buy muskets in Lyons or sword-blades in Breda?"

"Ah, 'tis little enough I feel for King James or any of them that will have sent the *padre* to his doom!" she cried. "And what is a Jacobite or a Hanoverian, or what worth King George or King James, that you must be murdering and slaying and he that was a good man and kind—when he wasn't in liquor—should lie in heathen ground?"

She leaped up, quivering with passion lashed aflame.

"Jacobite! The toe of my boot to the word and them that use it! Little enough hath it meant to me but poverty and exile and the death of her that bore me and now—and now—the *padre*—and now——"

She fled from the cabin in tears, and her stateroom door slammed after her.

"Poor lass! Poor lass!" sighed my great-uncle. "It hath been a trying day for her. We must be lenient."

"You should be down on your knees, beseeching her forgiveness, you who wantonly dragged her into this danger!" I snarled at him.

" 'Wantonly,' Robert?" he objected mildly. "Certes, you should know better by now. My reasons were of the best, my motives of the highest."

He rang the silver bell in front of him, and when Gunn appeared said—

"Send Coupeau to me."

Then he turned to me again—

"You, of all persons, Robert, have least cause to censure me for Mistress O'Donnell's presence."

"I have most!" I retorted hotly. "I am so unfortunate as to be related to you, and therefor must be in some measure a sharer of the obloquy attached to your deeds."

He wagged his head sadly.

"Words! What rash, unreasoning words will not youth sponsor in its blind prejudices! Peter, I appeal to you: Doth not my grandnephew lie in my debt for my conduct in arranging for him the opportunity to squire our little Irish maid?"

Peter drained a glass of brandy.

"You better not say any more, Murray," he grunted. "*Neen!* Maybe you say too much."

"I had supposed myself the model of diplomacy," protested my great-uncle.

Peter's little eyes twinkled behind their protective rolls of fat.

"*Ja*, you been pretty smart, Murray. But der smart feller, he has to look oudt or he gets too smart. *Ja!* Andt when he gets too smart he is in trouble."

Coupeau's hideous mask of a face showed in the companionway entrance.

"*Oui, m'sieu?*" he growled.

"Ah, Coupeau," answered Murray. "A strange sail approaches the island, perhaps Flint, perhaps another. To us it matters not. We must entrench ourselves ashore. The treasure and sufficient stores for two weeks' sojourn will be shifted to the stockaded fort on the hill north of Captain Kidd's anchorage. The men must work all night again if necessary. Do you understand?"

"*Oui, m'sieu,*" replied the gunner.

"That is well. You will rout them out at once."

"*Oui, m'sieu.*"

And Coupeau clumped off down the companionway. A moment later his hoarse voice split the quiet of the ship as he commenced to bark his orders.

"A stout fellow, Coupeau," commented my great-uncle. "I have never regretted the salvaging of him. But perhaps it would be as well if we went on deck and lent him moral support."

As a matter of fact, there was less disposition than we anticipated on the part of the crew to object to this new labor. And the reason was not far to seek. The transfer of the treasure to the fort by the anchorage furnished them an opportunity to establish an intimacy of contact with it they had not known previously, an intimacy alluring, stimulating, discomposing. True, they already had transferred the entire cargo of the *Santissima Trinidad* once, had removed the half of it from the *Royal James* to the Dead Man's Chest, and only two days since had broken out the remainder for division with the *Walrus*.

But that was very different from shifting the squat, weighty, little chests and kegs and the canvas-jacketed bars overland in the darkness, along brush-paths dimly illuminated by occasional lanthorns and torches, into a corner of the log block-house which was the citadel of Flint's ramshackle fort—very different, too, from the realization that the treasure's well-nigh fabulous wealth was outside the charmed hull of the *Royal James*, where Murray's personality and the arbitrary divisions of rank and intellect had reared an insuperable barrier betwixt it and themselves, lying down instead in a promiscuous heap without a door to guard it, where any one of them could gloat over its bright mysteries.

Peter and I, with Moira and Ben Gunn and Scipio, followed the main column of the evacuation about midnight. Coupeau had led the first contingent, some of whom we met returning to the ship, to fetch a second load of stores. My great-uncle was to come after us with these and the remainder of the crew, leaving behind on the *Royal James* only some twenty-odd men who had not yet recovered sufficiently from wounds received in the two actions with the *Santissima Trinidad* and the *Walrus* to permit of their removal, and who were made as comfortable as possible on the gundeck.

I noted uneasily that the groups who passed us were talking eagerly amongst themselves, with no appearance of the surliness to be expected normally from any sailors put to extra work, although they fell silent as soon as they saw who we were.

"They have never been drinking," I muttered to Peter.

"*Neen*," he answered. "But they get drunk on der treasure."

"Do but see how it is a fell curse upon all who touch it," said Moira. "Ah, blessed Virgin, that it were all in the depths of the ground where God first planted it!"

Our misgivings were justified when we toiled up the sandy slopes of the hill upon which the stockade was built. The glare of an immense bonfire showed through the trees, and rude voices were chanting that sinister sea-song which had been my introduction to the pirate brotherhood:

"Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

I had never heard it sung by the *James'* crew before.

As we approached the palisades we descried through the openings a score or two of them, comical in their broad pantaloons, their belts bristling with cutlases and pistols, prancing around the fire like Mohicans dancing a scalp.

They paid no attention to us, and we crossed the cleared area inside to the door of the blockhouse, where Coupeau lounged against the log wall.

"*M'sieu le capitaine* ees com'?" he inquired.

I told him yes.

"Ees com' queeck?" he insisted.

I shrugged my shoulders to this, and he grunted.

"Maybe so we mak'—— com' at those rrrrascal," he suggested.

"Have they had any rum?" I asked suspiciously.

"*Non*. They have zee fire—and they see much trrreasure."

He paused.

"Maybe so you com'," he said, and without waiting for us to answer, strode alone toward the fire.

I shoved Moira inside the blockhouse, and Peter and I started after him. I made to draw a pistol, but Peter caught my arm.

"*Neen*," he said. "We do this wit' our fists andt our voice, Bob—or we don't do it at all."

Such were Coupeau's tactics—but he relied mostly upon his fists. He waded into the dancers, smiting right and left, and Peter and I came behind him. Several men reached for their cutlases, but these we got to before they had time to draw steel. In the middle of the row Murray's voice flashed out from the shadows like a sword, and our opponents cowered away.

" 'Sdeath," he drawled. "Will you fellows think to take advantage of me because I turn my back upon you for an hour or two?"

He came forward into the circle of light.

"I warned you no longer ago than last night," he went on icily. "It should have been sufficient. Coupeau!"

"*Oui, m'sieu.*"

"Who began the trouble this time?"

The gunner fastened his awful visage upon the whitening faces of the group of trouble-makers.

"That man."

He pointed.

"Heem. Heem Heem. Heem."

"Very good," said my great-uncle. "Most of us prefer to sleep, seeing that we confront the certainty of a busy morrow; but I have no wish to disappoint those who would amuse themselves tonight. Nay, I will provide entertainment for them. Take those five, Coupeau, and the fellows who broiled with them, and stand by whilst their followers lay on an hundred and fifty lashes with the cat for each."

There was an instant's silence, then a gasp of terror, and one man commenced to sob.

"Oh, Gawd, cap'n, sir, we'm can't stand no hun'erd'n' fufty lashes! No mortal man could. Doan't 'ee say it, sir! We'm'll crawl to 'ee, cap'n, sir, 'deed we will."

"You should have thought of that beforehand," replied Murray, unmoved.

"Not a hun'erd an' fifty, cap'n," pleaded a second man. " 'Twill kill us, sure."

"I should not be surprized if it would," agreed my great-uncle, taking snuff. "In fact, were I in your shoes I should hope that it would. Take them away, Coupeau—out of earshot, if you please."

CHAPTER XIX

THE ATTACK ON THE STOCKADE

DAYLIGHT revealed the *Walrus* heading in toward the mouth of the anchorage; but the smoke from our cooking-fires obviously puzzled her, and she heaved to and lowered a boat which pulled up the channel to investigate. 'Twas impossible from our hill-top to see what the boat's crew did; apparently they turned back so soon as they had convinced themselves the *James* was not lurking in ambush. And the *Walrus* took the boat in tow and bore off to the northward under full sail.

"She is bound for the North Inlet," commented Murray, pocketing his glass. "Flint will find the *James* and be with us again by mid-afternoon."

"When his battery will make short work of this gimcrack fortress," I said disagreeably.

"You are unduly pessimistic, Robert," he reproved me. "'Tis impossible for a vessel of the *Walrus'* draft to lie so that she can bring a full broadside to bear."

"Why not make terms with them?" I argued. "You have the eight hundred thousand pounds safe."

"I stated my opposing reasons last night to Mistress O'Donnell."

"But you had not then been compelled to flog five knaves to death," I objected. "This is no crew to fight a forlorn hope."

"They and their like have fought for me these thirty years," he replied placidly. "Nor do I consider the approaching struggle a forlorn hope. Let me involve Flint in an attack upon us here, and I promise you he'll not bring off enough men to work his ship. Also, you err in your first assertion, Robert. Only three of last night's mutineers have died. The other two are yet alive—albeit uncomfortable, I fancy; exceeding uncomfortable."

"And how they must love you!" I sneered.

"Fear me, you should say," he corrected. "As I have told you, I have developed my opportunities in life rather by stimulating men's fears than by angling for their affections. Affection, Robert—and the argument is applicable alike to that tender sentiment which arises periodically betwixt the sexes—is a most unchancy emotion. Fear, on the contrary, once aroused, is never forgotten."

"*Ja*," said Peters, "andt from fear grows hate."

My great-uncle smiled.

"I find myself, as always, moved to admiration of the philosophy you have distilled from your wide range of experience, friend Peter," he answered. "But suffer me to remind you that, in the language of the alchemists, fear and hate are mutually reactive principles, the one consuming and neutralizing the other."

Peter chewed a grass-stem without replying, and after a courteous pause to allow him ample opportunity, Murray inquired:

"Shall we ascertain if Mistress O'Donnell hath completed her toilet? I own to a normal morning hunger."

"Your mention of her is the mightiest argument for a settlement with Flint," I protested. "What hope is there for her, if you——"

"Robert," he interrupted gently, "you speak to no purpose. The maid's entire future is entangled with my success—and of my success there can be no reasonable doubt. What? Shall I bow the knee to that misbegotten crew of gallows cheats aboard the *Walrus*? You have seen them!"

His voice rose.

"You know how much of discipline there is amongst them. Do you think that men of their stamp can overcome me? 'Tis incredible, I say! I can not fail."

"*Ja*," said Peter, spitting out his grass-stem. "Once you failed."

"Failure is a word of relative significance," retorted my great-uncle. "By that which you term failure, Peter, I was impelled to adopt the career which hath nourished me to this pitch, that I am the center of a conspiracy which shall overturn kingdoms. Failure! You will be telling me next that I am lacking in godliness!"

"*Ja*," said Peter, unperturbed.

"I concede the point!" exclaimed my great-uncle, chuckling. "And seeing that we are at last in agreement upon one point, let us sink our other differences in a pot of chocolate."

There was no more to be said, and however unwillingly, Peter and I were constrained to do all that we could to aid in strengthening the position. 'Twas Peter's idea that the men be set to digging shallow pits behind the stockade to provide additional shelter against musketry fire from the border of woods and undergrowth at the base of the hill. 'Twas likewise Peter who suggested, vastly to her indignation, that we construct for Moira a shot-proof cubby-hole of treasure chests and kegs in one corner of the blockhouse.

We had scare finished these preparations when the *Walrus* reappeared and tacked up the anchorage to the elbow where it bends sharply around the larger island which covers the entrance. Farther she was unable to go because of shoal water, and for the same reason she was obliged to anchor practically bow on to us, which meant that, as Murray had predicted, she could train on the hilltop only her chase-guns and two or three of the carronades mounted for'ard on her gundeck. But she showed no immediate disposition to use her battery. Her people seemed to be concerned entirely with the task of disembarkation, and in the space of a glass we reckoned that all of a hundred and fifty men were landed and straggled irregularly into the forest.

Then there was a lull in Flint's activities, and we made our final dispositions for the anticipated attack. Murray stationed his men all around the circuit of the stockade, except for those included in what I have termed the after-guard. These fellows, about twenty in number, were held in the blockhouse as a reserve to be thrown to the support of any part of our line which might require assistance. Murray himself with Coupeau, Peter and me stood in the center of the enclosure where he could keep watch upon all that went on.

The afternoon was warm and drowsy. The *Walrus* looked like a toy ship on the oily-smooth surface of the inlet. There was not a sign of life aboard her, and the forest that spread betwixt us and the shore hugged silently whatever secrets it covered.

My great-uncle frowned thoughtfully.

"This is not like Flint," he remarked. "He must always fly bull-headed to the attack."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a shout came from the side of the stockade fronting the inlet.

"Here be Flint's Redhead!"

And conflicting cries:

"Shoot mun!"

"'Tis flag o' truce!"

"Ta lucky lad!"

We ran forward to the stockade, bidding the men withhold their fire, and Peter boosted me up on the cross-bar that bound the logs together. From this height I could survey the denuded slopes of the hill and the jungle growth of scrub trees and bush that cinctured it. And forth from the forest wall projected the unmistakable flaming locks of Darby McGraw, with one arm which flourished diligently what once had been a white shirt. At the first glimpse of me he scrambled into the open.

"Will ye be letting me come in, Masther Bob?" he called.

"Why, that depends," I answered him. "Are you for spying upon us?"

"Sure, the thought was never in me mind. I ha' a message for himself."

"Who?"

"Himself—him that's uncle to ye."

"Well, seeing that we hear each other excellently as we are, suppose you speak your message from the spot you stand on," I said.

"Troth, that will suit me fine," he replied with alacrity. "And 'tis easy said. Flint will ha' Cap'n Murray shift the treasure to the foot of the hill, and that done, the *Walrus* will take it and go. If he won't, we'll be takin' it anyways—or if by chance we don't, we'll blow the *James* out o' the water and leave ye all marooned."

He waxed confidential.

"Aye, and he means that same, Masther Bob. Ye may take me word for it. We're a wild, angry crew for the surprize ye give us in the dark."

"'Twas a fit reward for your treachery, Darby," I returned with some heat.

He hung his head, digging with his toe in the sand.

"Ah, but that's what pirates will be doing," he said. "And what way will there be kindness betwixt men if they do be fighting? Or wanting, the one, what the other has?"

"Maybe we haven't the treasure here at all," I suggested.

"We know dif'rent. The wounded men in the *James* were afther tellin' us."

I looked down inquiringly at my great-uncle.

"If they seek terms, they are uncertain of success," he said. "Send the boy away."

"But if they destroy the *James?*"

"First they will attack—and after that we will deal with the problem of protecting the ship."

And as I hesitated—

"Be so good as to answer him at once, Robert, or I shall have him shot as he stands."

"Go back, Darby," I called. "Captain Murray will have none of your offer."

"God save us!" he exclaimed involuntarily. "I'm thinkin' that will be the death of many a tall feller, Masther Bob. Well, good luck to ye and to Masther Peter and the elegant young maid. If we all come out safe——"

My great-uncle leaped upon a tree-stump and fired a pistol over Darby's head. The boy stood motionless a moment, mouth agape.

"The old ——!" he howled then, and fled down the hillside for all he was worth.

FLINT did not wait to receive Murray's verbal answer; that pistol-shot was sufficiently explicit. Three musket-shots echoed it from the foot of the hill, and at once there was a renewed bustle of men on the fo'csle of the *Walrus*. A puff of white smoke blew up from the deck, and the crack of a long twelve started myriads of sea-birds from the seaward marshes. The shot sang over us and crashed into the forest beyond. The other chase-gun bowled a shot into the enclosure, where it simply buried itself in the soft sand. Two carronades, with lower mounts and shorter range, discharged missiles that fell short of the stockade. And that first salvo might pass for a chronology of the bombardment to which we were subjected until sunset.

One man was killed, and no material damage was done. The carronades were unable to reach the blockhouse with their heavier shot, and the long Toms lacked the power to penetrate the green wood of the walls. Most of the round-shot plumped into the sand. Three posts of the stockade were knocked over and promptly set up again. That was all. The noise was most impressive, with the echoes reverberating across the island from the sounding-board of the Spyglass, but the net result was to imbue me with a confidence I had not previously entertained. When darkness intervened and the firing ceased we felt that we had been the winners of the first bout of the struggle.

In the mean time we had not seen a trace of the landing-party from the *Walrus*, and as the night shut down we all peered curiously through the posts of the stockade, expecting momentarily to discover a rush of crouching figures. But hour after hour passed without a sound to disturb the silence, and even Murray, whose nerves were of forged steel, became uneasy as he up-ended the hour-glass for the third time since sunset and decided to inspect the circuit of the defenses.

"There is another hand than Flint's behind these Fabian tactics," he observed. "Perhaps John Silver's. 'Tis a clever rogue, and a cunning. We can not be too vigilant."

Moira, poor lass, was asleep beneath the stack of gold and silver inside the blockhouse. Ben Gunn and black Scipio, equally frightened, were huddled on the doorstep; and the men of the after-guard were sprawled in the sand, some of them asleep, some of them gambling—the pirates of both crews were inveterate gamblers—at pitch-penny or with pebbles and shells or at a kind of mumbletypeg with their clasp-knives.

Coupeau joined us on the southern arc of the stockade. He reported dim flittings and shadowy movements on the lower hillside, but naught in the nature of an advance or a threat of one. Elsewhere the men rose from their burrows and sullenly or stupidly, according to their dispositions, affirmed they had seen no enemies. On the north side we came to a pit which was empty, and in the one next to it a man lay on his stomach as if asleep.

Murray prodded him with his sword, and the fellow groaned, but did not stir.

"What is the matter with this man?" demanded my great-uncle.

"Please, zur, 'tis Job Pytchens," answered the man next beyond.

"I asked what was the matter with him," said my great-uncle coldly.

"He'm wur one o' they as had a hun'erd 'n' fufty lashes, cap'n, zur."

I shuddered. My great-uncle took snuff.

"And who is gone from this vacant place?" he pressed.

"Tom Morphew, zur. He'm dead, zur."

"Was he shot?"

"No, zur, cap'n. He'm had a hun'erd 'n' fufty lashes, too."

"Where is he?"

There was a barely appreciable pause.

"Please, zur, us buried him," the man answered.

"Where?"

The man waved an arm vaguely over the sandy top of the hill.

"Ah! Well, you will leave unburied the next man who dies, be he Job or another—

else I shall have the cat administered to all of you who have abandoned your posts without permission."

" 'Iss, zur. Thank 'ee, zur," replied the man—but there was no thanks in his snarling voice; his face was masked by the darkness.

"Stap me," said Murray, turning away, "but these rascals are becoming as slack as Flint's tattertails!"

Across the clearing a musket exploded. Then another and another. A volley crackled from the lower slopes, and our men replied. A hoarse yelling underscored the firing.

"At last!"

Murray's voice vibrated with exultation.

"Now we shall scoop the rogues like so many grains of sand. The fools! A night attack is fatal with undisciplined men."

We ran past the blockhouse, where the after-guard were scrambling to their feet and Moira was wringing her hands in the doorway.

"Ye won't be leaving me!" she cried to us.

"You must remain under cover, my dear," said my uncle kindly. " 'Twould distress all of us had we to be concerned for your safety."

" 'Tis not lead or steel I will be fearful of," says she, "but the cruel memories that do be creeping from the treasure boxes. My troth, I'd liefer be here in the open than within."

My great-uncle hesitated, plainly exasperated by her persistence in remaining outside.

"Where is Gunn?" he asked.

"Oh, him!"

Moira's laughter trilled as lightly as if there were no messengers of death in the air.

"He's where ye would have put me first—under the treasure. And he's welcome to it."

"Be that as it may," he snapped, giving rein to his exasperation, "here you shall not stay, my lass, and we are pressed——"

A great roar of firing burst out upon the northern front of the stockade, and mingled with the reports of the muskets were shouts of:

"Down arms, *Jameses!*"

"Step aside, *James* lads!"

"All we want is old Murray!"

And a wailing voice cried over and over again—

"Here be Tom Morphew 'n' his bloody back, mates!"

The firing sputtered and dwindled and was succeeded by a prodigious scuffling and clatter of cutlases.

"We'll do 'ee no harm, *Jameses!*"

And now I recognized Silver's voice.

"Strike arms, *Jameses!*"

Three men, one of them with a broken arm, raced up to us.

"Long John's in," sobbed one.

"Tom Morphew let 'em in," panted a second.

"Excellently planned," drawled Murray.

I heard the click of his snuffbox.

"Yet observe how fate hath tricked our opponents," he went on. "They timed their second attack to catch me on the southern side of the stockade, whereas, thanks to the perversity of womankind, I am strategically disposed to exploit the disorder which attends their success. I think we shall teach the clever Master Silver a lesson."

"Yes, if your men are loyal," I said angrily.

"Any crew are loyal in victory, Robert," he answered.

"*Ja*," spoke Peter, "but you better not let dot feller talk about his bloody back."

"You are squeemish, it seems, Peter," murmured my great-uncle. "Well, I shall even seek to humor you. Coupeau!"

His voice hardened.

"*Oui, m'sieu.*"

The gunner stepped from the huddled ranks of the after-guard.

"We attack."

But indeed the attack was made upon us. We had not advanced four paces from the shelter of the blockhouse when fifty or sixty of the invaders stormed out of the night, howling and waving their cutlases. We fired one smashing volley that dropped a fourth of them, and charged. A few pistol-shots met us, but most of the *Walrus'* men had discarded their muskets, preferring to fight sailor-fashion with the cutlas, and they were utterly disheartened by the unexpectedness of the reception we gave them.

Murray's slender dress-sword was a bodkin of death which pricked a path through the densest ranks. On one side of him Peter swung a clubbed musket which shattered heads and limbs at every step. On his other side Coupeau wielded a cutlas with equal effect.

A yellow crescent moon was riding over the treetops, and we halted in the gap to take stock of our situation by its light.

Half-way down the hill a group of the *Walrus'* men rallied and commenced to fire up at us; and Coupeau was for pushing after them, but my great-uncle checked him.

"No, no, Coupeau! Yonder is John Silver, astraddle of the stockade. See, he is helping up another fellow. They have been cut off by our charge, and if you please, we'll deal with them first."

I WILL admit a pang of sympathy for Silver. He was not more than twenty yards from us, and by dint of well-nigh incredible efforts, with the other man to boost him, he had succeeded in scaling the stockade and was sitting there, with his one leg dangling inside. When we discovered him he started to swing his leg over the top, evidently intending to abandon his companion. But whether because of something the other man said or because he feared he must injure himself in dropping the eight feet to the ground without any one to check his fall, he abruptly changed his mind and faced about toward us very resolutely, seizing hold of the crutch which hung from his neck by its thong.

The man at the foot of the stockade gathered himself together like a coiling serpent and plucked a long knife from his belt. He had been in the shadow until then, but now the moonlight shone over his torso and we recognized him for the blind man, Pew. He had lost his green eye-shade, and his pockmarked face was cadaverous in the yellow glow. His eyes were open, and they seemed to smolder dully as they strained at us. His knife glinted in his hand.

"Will you be assisted down and be hanged whole, or must we cut you down, Silver?" hailed Murray.

He, like the rest of us, ignored the blind man. Our attention was fixed upon Silver, his broad face very calm in the moonlight.

"Them there ain't exackly tempting terms, Cap'n Murray, sir," Silver answered temperately. "Couldn't ye be a mite more generous?"

"I am serving you a dish no more highly sauced than that you intended for me," returned my great-uncle dryly.

"Now, sir; now, sir," remonstrated Silver. "How can ye say that? All we done was to try and persuade ye to give us our share o' the treasure—you ha'in' eight hundred thousand pound stowed away special, accordin' to your own story. And if we come in by the back door a'ter it, why, that was so's we'd hurt ye least."

"You'd argue yourself to a block of ice in ——, Silver," rejoined my great-uncle amusedly. "Throw down that crutch! Drop your knife, you, sirrah, Pew—or whatever your name is!"

Sword in hand, he advanced ahead of the rest of us, who were strung out all the way from the gap in the stockade. Coupeau was at his elbow, and Peter and I close behind.

"Come," he adjured them a second time. "I'm in no mood to talk terms, and if you delay 'twill make your end the more painful."

Silver's face went livid in the moonlight.

"Aye," rasped the one-legged man, "ye'll lash us bloody-raw like the lads as let us in tonight!"

And as Murray continued to advance, he struck out with his crutch.

"Keep off," he shrieked. "Keep off!" And then: "I can't reach him, Ezra. Let him have it!"

Pew crouched with his knife-hand drawn back.

"Aye, it takes blind Pew to let him have it," he croaked in his hateful voice.

His hand jerked forward. There was a flash in the moonlight, and my great-uncle staggered, the flung knife buried to the hilt in his side.

"I am stabbed," he gasped.

Silver brandished his crutch over his head.

"Pew's stabbed Murray!" he shouted. "Come on, *Walruses!* Lay off, ye *James* lads—we'll not harm ye, mates. Treasure for all, and no more tyranny!"

Peter and I caught my great-uncle as he fell. Coupeau jumped at the blind man with a bellow of rage, cutlas raised to strike; but as he came within reach Silver poised his crutch like a spear, leaned over and drove the sharp spike of the ferrule through the gunner's eye into the brain. Coupeau dropped in his tracks.

"I ha' done for Coupeau," Silver shouted again. "Don't make Long John do it all, lads!"

There was such a rush of enemies, such a howl of exultation, as took my breath away.

"Do you hold Murray, Peter," I said. "I'll finish that precious pair."

And I ran in at Pew, albeit more warily than Coupeau; but the blind man—and certes, if he was blind his hearing was so marvelous as to make up for it—retained a clubbed pistol, which was a serviceable weapon at close quarters, and Silver covered him overhead with that deadly crutch. I shouted to the after-guard to shoot them, but our people had not reloaded their pieces, and many were already engaged with the party we had just driven out, who swarmed in again through the same gap. Those of the *James'* men who were nearest were palpably lukewarm, and Silver, atop of the stockade, perceiving his advantage, thrust his crutch at me and continued trumpeting his rallying-cries.

"Murray's a goner, mates! Coupeau's shark-bait! There's only the two Yankees left. Go easy wi' they *Jameses*. Naught for ye to fight about, *James* lads! We'll divide square with ye."

Men swirled toward us from all sides of the stockade, the *James'* crew mingled with the *Walrus'*, and where our people fought at all 'twas faint-heartedly and to no purpose. We were pressed back, and presently were put to it to avoid being surrounded.

"We go to der house, Bob," squeaked Peter. "Der *James* men don't fight for us no more."

He had Murray's limp body slung over one shoulder and still retained the iron barrel of his musket—the stock had been demolished; but he ran easily beside me through the sand.

There was tremendous confusion within the stockade enclosure, and but for this and a considerate cloud which draped the new-risen moon we should never have gained the blockhouse. Our men disappeared at every yard. Two were slain in the beginning of the retreat, and the continuous cries to "stand off, *Jameses*—us won't hurt 'ee," sapped the remainder of such loyalty as had survived the vicissitudes of the last few days.

We reached the blockhouse alone on the side opposite the door, and circled it cautiously, no little concerned for Moira's safety, for pistols were popping and cutlases clashing in several directions close at hand. With the moon obscured we could not see a musket's length ahead, and as I turned in toward the black oblong of the doorway I tripped over a corpse.

" 'Tis on your own head your death will be, my man," said a cool voice. "I can hear you fine, and if you're not after——"

"Moira!" I exclaimed.

"And is it you, Bob? Oh, blessed saints, but I'm that glad I thought you were—Is that Peter?"

"*Ja*," said Peter.

"And what will ye have on your shoulder? A dead man? Is it him I shot a few minutes back?"

" 'Tis Captain Murray," I answered, making way for Peter.

"Oh, Queen of Heaven! Sure, we're in bad case."

"We are," I assented grimly as I followed Peter inside. "Have you a light?"

She took a lanthorn from under a cloth, and its scanty rays played hide-and-seek with the shadows over the rude log walls and the piles of rum barrels and kegs of hard-tack and the clumsy stack of treasure.

"Where are Ben Gunn and Scipio?" I asked.

"They made off after I shot him that lies outside. They were mightily feared of what Captain Flint would be doing to them did he find them here, and one of his men dead at the door."

Peter laid my great-uncle gently upon the earthen floor—there was no softer bed—and began cutting away the garments from around the hilt of the knife, which was still fixed in his right side.

"And why didn't you go with them?" I asked. She gave me an indignant look.

"And be leaving the two of ye! I am not that kind of friend, Bob."

Peter looked up from his task.

"You got to watch dot door, Bob. Andt, Moira, you bring me some rum. Maybe Murray gets back his sense before——"

I suddenly found myself unwilling to believe it could be so.

"He can't, Peter!"

"*Ja*," replied the Dutchman patiently. "Pretty soon he goes. He bleeds inside."

I stumbled to the doorway with my head in a whirl. Murray dying? 'Twas incredible! That tremendous personality, so masterful, so aloof, dominating all with whom he came in contact, saltily compounded of wickedness, greatness, wisdom and naive vanity! And explain it how you will, I suddenly discovered an admiration for him which had been growing for months beneath my surface resentment. Up to this moment I had detested him. But I choked now at the thought of his death. Whatever he was, he was no coward. And there was about his end in this sordid, haphazard fashion, stabbed by a blind man in the dark, a redeeming touch of high tragedy. He, whose ambitions had vaulted the stars, to perish by the hand of Pew! And in a moment when apparently he had snatched victory from defeat!

Mechanically I carried chests of gold and silver ingots from the heap of treasure and built a barricade across the doorway. There were several spare muskets and pistols, and I loaded these and placed them handy, then knelt behind the barricade and waited for what was to come. But nothing came. Feet shush-shushed in the sand all around the blockhouse; voices called, questioned and argued; an occasional shot was fired—no more. Flint's triumph had been too amazingly complete for him to grasp, and evidently there were dissensions in the pirate's ranks as to what the next step should be.

The hour-glass we had fetched from the *Royal James* stood by the door, and I remember that I turned it twice before Peter tapped my shoulder.

"He wants you," he said.

Murray lay with his head in Moira's lap. On his face was stamped a waxy pallor. His nostrils were sunken and pinched in. A crimson froth showed at the corner of his mouth. But his tawny eyes blazed with the unconquerable fire of his spirit. As I stooped over him a mocking gleam radiated from their black depths, and his lips moved in almost voicelss speech.

"Sorry, eh?" I nodded, and the mockery became more pronounced.

"Would have — won you — boy—in — time." Moira wiped the dreadful bubbles from his lips.

"You—won't—carry — out — plot?" he asked.

" 'Twould be dishonest to promise," I answered. "And I doubt if we are like to live much longer than you." The fingers of one hand fluttered strangely.

"Tut, boy—never—lose hope. Win—yet—myself."

His colorless lips parted in a ghastly smile at the shocked disbelief in my face.

"This—will be—end—of Flint. Kill me—kill himself." His fingers fluttered again, and Moira whispered—

" 'Twill be his snuffbox he's after wanting, Bob."

And as I fumbled for it in the wreck of his coat she added—

"But 'twill be his death does he use it the once."

I hesitated, but the look in his eyes impelled me to give it to him.

"Good lad!"

And his fingers closed lovingly on the jeweled trinket, picking at the lid he was wont to click open and shut in moments of perplexity. The tawny eyes flirted toward Moira.

"Take care—maid—good blood—in—her. Family, Robert—breeding—landmarks in—mad world."

"I'll do what I can," I promised, seeing he expected an answer.

"Might do—worse—or more," he replied with the shadow of a smile. "Pew's knife — kept you — being — duke — Moira——"

A pause whilst Moira wiped his mouth.

"A mad world," he repeated. "What will—Prince Charles—say?"

His eyes clouded, and he murmured a snatch of song, one of those ranting Jacobite ballads that spread like wildfire after the '45—

> "Cope sent a challenge frae Dunbar,
> 'Charlie, meet me an ye daur'——"

A coughing fit interrupted him, weakened him so I thought he was sped; but the ghostly voice went on with a hint of the gay, reckless tune:

> "Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye waukin' yet?
> Or are your drums a-beatin' yet?
> If ye waur waukin' I wad——"

His voice strengthened.

"Ah, your Royal Highness! The procession is ordered—the heralds—waiting—my Lords—Commons——"

He struggled so to rise that to save him I propped him against my shoulder.

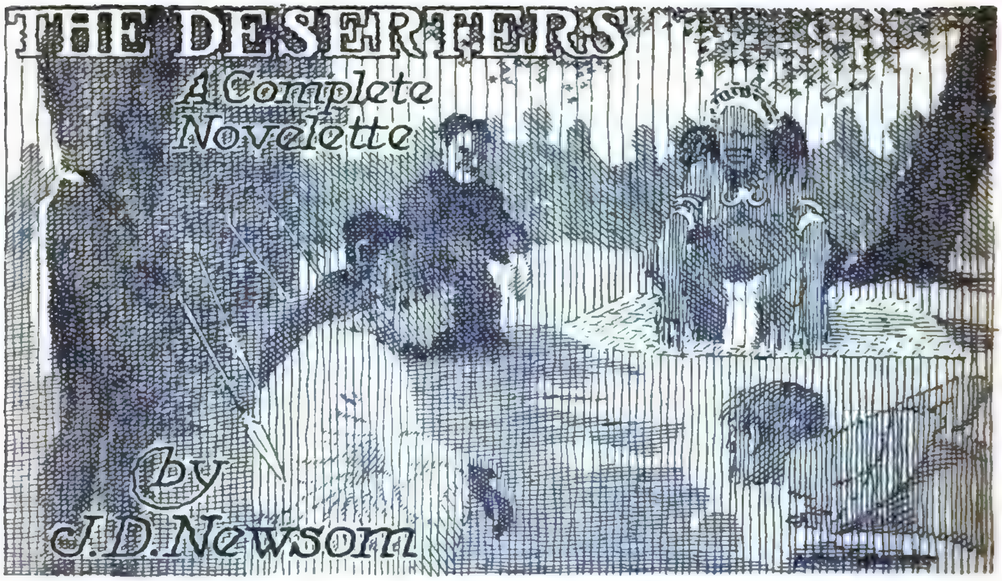
"A glad day—this—and long coming. Do you use snuff—sir? 'Tis Rip-Rap—a sound brand."

He opened the box and raised a pinch to his nostrils.

"A glad day—sir—but a mad world."

And so he died.

TO BE CONCLUDED



Author of "Marty's Bones," "The Come-back," etc.

EVER since I observed two gentlemen of no mean physique assault each other in the gloomy darkness which enshrouds the corner of Elizabeth Street, Sydney, I hurry apprehensively past the spot painfully conscious of a tingling sensation in the region of my hinter collar stud. My physique, unfortunately, does not lend itself readily to the violent motions necessary to resist assault, and I am bound to admit that it takes all my courage to throw myself across that black, mephitic gulf and head, breathing more freely, toward the comparative brilliance of Castlereagh Street.

Circumstances which I could have controlled, but did not want to, kept me downtown one night until close upon eleven o'clock, an hour when Sydney presents the lamentable aspect of a dead city, or rather a dying one, for night-hawks are not unknown in the antipodes.

As I approached the fateful corner I experienced my customary epidermal reaction and literally ran when the shadows thickened about me. After three steps I perceived that I was being followed, not merely followed, but pursued. Adjusting my spectacles more firmly upon my nose I accelerated my pace, I flew toward the light. My tracker, however, sprinted and drew abreast in the very darkest spot of the roadway. Instead of assassinating me, he clutched at my coat sleeve and allowed himself to be dragged along behind me until his added weight obliged me to come to a halt. This is an effective method of checking runaways, but is hard on shoe-leather, and as such does not recommend itself to economical minds.

Glancing at my aggressor I perceived him to be small, in fact, on closer inspection, diminutive. At once my indignation arose and burst from my lips in an explosive—

"What is the meaning of this outrage?"

"Outrage nofink," panted the child, who on yet closer inspection turned out to be the intrepid son of my next-door neighbor. "Outrage, my eye! Wait a minute, will yer. *Wait!* Ballard's up in your rooms and he sent me for to tell you to go home now, and he said for you to give me sixpence."

The bargain seemed preposterous, but I gave him a shilling that I might free myself from his tenacious hold and reach the friendly effulgence of a street lamp.

Moreover, the fact that Ballard was in possession of my lodgings was an item of the utmost importance, for Ballard is my one point of contact with a world which I do not pretend to know. He is a seaman, a man of great wisdom and no learning. He sails in appalling ships to horrid islands where he has observed human nature in the raw. Personally I like human nature rather well done with condiments to make it palatable, but Ballard is an enthusiast—murder, pillage and other atrocities are what he thrives upon.

---

*"The Deserters," copyright, 1924, by J. D. Newsom.

We met on a park bench long months ago when he was recovering from the effects of over-much whisky and he adopted me, under the fallacious impression that I was sympathetic to the destitute and fallen. I never denied the accusation and since that time, when in port, he allows me to feed him and in exchange he gives me good advice and slaps between the shoulder-blades.

Last September he vanished. No longer was my landlady terrorized by his whirlwind arrivals, no longer was my door kicked open to the accompaniment of a resounding:

"I sees yer, yer —— plutocrat in yer carpet slippers! I sees yer!"

Inquiries at the office of the shipping line Ballard patronized met with poor results. There I was informed that he had deserted when his ship, the *Ruviana*, touched at Epoviti, a settlement on the coast of Guadalcanar in the Solomons. It sounded incredible in the face of his boastful pride in his work, but my informant was not joking.

And now Ballard was back again.

When I reached my lodgings the landlady, white as a ghost, greeted me in the hallway.

"He's hup there," she whispered. "He *would* go hup, and I couldn't keep him hout, that I could not."

I found Ballard warming his bare feet before the gas stove. Truth to tell he was bare all over except for his cheeks where a month's growth of black bristles sprouted luxuriantly. He sat in a rocking-chair nursing his knees and a grievance. His clothes were heaped on the floor where they steamed and exhaled an unclassifiable odor.

Also he was very sad. He greeted me without enthusiasm and asked for food and a pair of dry trousers.

Why his clothes were so very wet, why he had deserted, why he had seen fit to creep back to Australia where six months' imprisonment stared him in the face, he refused to say. There was, he hinted, too much to be said and he was very hungry.

"I been five mortal days in a coal-bunker," he vouchsafed while he hacked at his beard with my razors. "Five mortal days, and now I got to hide like as if I was an animal."

My rooms are in a populous neighborhood famous for its public houses, its drunks and its churches. It is a nice neighborhood where the work of degradation and salvation go on side by side—almost, one might say, hand in hand. Here noise is the inevitable concomitant of every human action. We show no restraint. We commit violence without false modesty, we beat our wives where we can be seen and heard—and brass bands save us.

And a brass band opened up with a triumphant blare just as Ballard was negotiating the angle of his jaw with a razor. At the first sound he leaped across the room and in so doing gashed open his chin. Dripping blood on the bath-mat he began to swear. His words were carefully chosen and not without charm. Perceiving that he was unburdening his soul of a great weight I allowed him to proceed until his vocabulary ran dry. Then I applied court-plaster to his wound and dressed him.

He was a changed man. Gone was the tongue-tied sullenness, but he still clung to his secret grievance. He admitted that he had swum ashore to avoid the immigration authorities and he added:

"You heard that brass band? Out after sinners, it is. And that's where they go wrong. You and me, we don't always do the right and proper thing and we ain't so lilly-white you'd notice it. No—but when I go wrong I go wrong with my eyes open. I know what I'm in for. This sin business is all wrong. What they want to save are the good ones, because that kind when it hits the skids—blooey!"

"Why the dogmatic assertion?" I inquired.

"What's that?" demanded Ballard. "New kind of food?"

Taking the hint I summoned the landlady who thrust at me a tray bearing cold roast mutton and dangerously green canned peas, and two small bottles of ale. She always does her gentlemen well.

We ate. Between mouthfuls Ballard talked lugubriously of virtue and its blindness, its positive danger. Having an open mind on the matter I let him rave.

"Salvation," he declared scornfully, "once you get it, if you don't watch your step, first thing you know you walk right into trouble."

I made protesting noises but he silenced me with a curt:

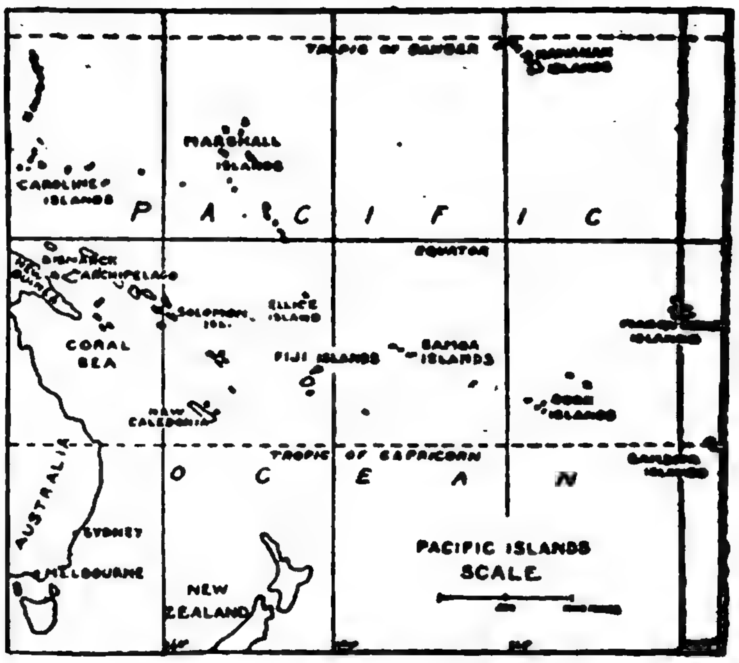
"You don't know much of anything anyhow. Let's move over by the stove and I'll explain so you'll see just how this business worked out."

MY LAST trip out (began Ballard) there was a new deck-hand on board the *Ruviana*, a guy by the name of Hargraves. He was about forty-five, I should say, a stocky, powerful man, all big chest and big belly and big neck and big eyes, big all over except upwards. He had a comfortable, head-of-the-family sort of face, and by rights he didn't belong on an island freighter at all. But then you meet all kinds in a foc'sle and I let him alone even though the others made a dead set for him. He took it all and said nothing. Went about his job in his blundering way and pretty soon he was left in peace. You can't do much to a fellow who just smiles and acts cheerful and won't take offence.

He let loose just once. He found Jimmy Beggs going through his kit and laughing fit to cry at the stuff he was hauling out. Say, this Hargraves went green about the corners of his mouth and he picks up Mr. Beggs, careless-like, and tosses him about ten feet. Jimmy hit the side of a bunk with his head, but that didn't stop him. He comes back for more as is proper and to be expected. And he got it! Believe me he got it! Hargraves just plays with him. Taps him on the jaw, taps him in the eye—quick as lightning he was on his big feet—and Beggs sat down on his ear to think it over. When he comes around he says he's sorry and Hargraves packs up his duds and behaves as if nothing had happened.

After that he became more talkative and tells us how he used to be a real estate man back in his home town and how he cracked up due to overwork. Nerves, he called it. Maybe he had 'em but they wasn't prominent.

But the queerest thing about Hargraves was this: He never did swear once, not one gentle little mild cuss. He didn't so much as raise his voice. Nobody minded that, but pretty soon he began to look hurt when any one "forgot himself," as he put it, and we had to go on deck to talk so he wouldn't hear. Bit inconvenient, but you got to humor a man like that sometimes.



Well, sir, as I said, I didn't bother about him much, nor him about me until we anchored off Panghoumen to load chrome. I got shore leave and went nosing around the town, which was full of Chinese labor and Anamite labor, Kanaka labor and French engineers and French cafés.

If ever you chance to go abroad remember to keep your mouth shut and you won't get hurt. You never can tell whose corns you're treading on. Foreigners don't always act as you might expect 'em to—and that cuts both ways.

For instance—me. I wandered into a nice clean-looking place and ordered a Pernod-gomme. Fellow sitting next to me starts to chat about the weather and we have another of these Pernod-gommes. 'Course I didn't get the drift of half his talk, but it was great feeling, international and friendly. So we had another of them drinks.

Never touch 'em. They're treacherous as——!

First thing I know we're in an argument about submarines and this bloke rises up and punches me because he says I've insulted him. I had not. All I said was:

"Tin fishes ain't no good except to kill other folks with. I'd rather boast of a couple of ill-found tramps than I would of a submarine."

But this fellow had a son in one of them and I didn't stand a chance. We was fighting all over the place in about three seconds and people was taking pot-shots at me from all around. They has me on the floor and up to the ceiling and out through the door, and then they starts dancing ring-around-a-rosies on my stomach. I was feeling awful sad and remorseful when who should butt in but Hargraves, nerves and all. He took that crowd and he shook it and threw it away. Before any of 'em could come back he caught me up and went trotting away toward the pier with me hanging under his arm.

I was grateful though stunned. He cleaned me up, put me between the blankets and sat there holding my hand for all to behold, which wasn't necessary, but what could I say?

That's another thing you want to remember: Pull your own weight always. Most times if a man helps you you're under an obligation to him and before you can turn around that obligation is beginning to sprout. If you forget all about it you're called ungrateful—and there you are. But that's neither here nor there.

Well, sir, after that I began to find out more and more about Hargraves. He was nuts on virtue and morals and purity. A Sailors' Rest on a Sunday evening would be wild devilment compared to Hargraves' society. He told me he was always having to wrestle with his conscience to keep from going wrong. Even so he had more virtues than a dog has fleas and they was just as inconvenient. Itching all the blessed time.

"I went out of the real estate business," says he, "because my clients as a class knew nothing and cared less about the Golden Rule. What they wanted was money. The strain was too great, I broke down. My physician sent me to sea."

Then he tries to reform me! Until he came along I thought I was just about normal and natural-like, but he showed me different, all in his quiet way, never raising his voice and always smiling. And what could I do? I couldn't talk back because he was too all-fired muscular and, of course, he'd pulled me out of a tight corner.

What would you do to a man like that? He called swearing a sin and drinking a glass of beer a crime, and above all things he hated women. No, come to think of it, that's not right. He was just too entirely good for 'em and he knew it, too.

One evening when we was sitting all by ourselves on the forward hatchway he says:

"Chivalry isn't dead, Ballard. Don't you believe it. There are knight errants abroad on this earth to this very day, ready to help the weak and redress their wrongs."

"Do you mean the harbor police?" says I. "Because if you do you'd better wake up."

"Police nothing," he snorts, injured-like. "I mean good men armed with high ideals and clad in the armor of righteousness. I'm a deck-hand now and proud of it."

Lawks! How he could go on! He said he was "face to face with the elements!"

The sermon lasted about an hour, and then says I, wanting to break away:

"Now that I think of it the boys asked me to play pinochle. Guess I'll join them below."

"No — don't," says Hargraves. "All games of chance are reprehensible. Not good ethics."

I was reforming slow but sure, but I didn't want to absorb too much good advice all at once. It didn't seem all fair and square.

"Hargraves," says I, "you're a good lad and I know you're right but I can't turn over a new leaf so quick."

"You must," he murmurs. "Learn to control yourself."

"Some other day," says I.

But at that he caught me a clip on the jaw and sat down on my chest, where he stayed until our watch was called, for it was a dark night and I couldn't very well holler, him being so heavy.

Says he, getting up:

"Ballard, I did it for your own good. I'm going to teach you self-control because I like you well enough to hurt you. It's ethically correct.

So I reformed—it was either that or commit murder—and things went from bad to worse until I hated the sight of Hargraves, but I couldn't shake him off.

When the *Ruviana* hove-to any place and I went ashore, there was Hargraves at my elbow, and instead of doing the grog shops as I used to, he'd take me for nice long walks up in the hills and teach me the names of the flowers out of a book.

——! They used to call us "Mary and her little lamb," down in the foc'sl.

"Mary and her little lamb, its fleece ——"

But Hargraves heard 'em and talked to 'em mild and gentle, promising to teach them better manners if they didn't drop it, which they did pretty quick after one look at his face.

For two cents I'd have brained him, if only he hadn't acted so noble at Panghoumen.

WELL, sir, that's how matters stood when we reached Epoviti, which is a settlement on the Guadalcanar coast, and about the worst place this side of Hades that I know of. It ain't big, but it's by far the rottenest, lowest kind of a dump in the islands.

When you anchor in the bay everything looks fine: Sandy beach and trees and a background of —— big hills just far enough inland to look nice and green and restful.

There's a couple of planters owns large estates on the north side. They've built two-story houses and they make their own electricity. Live in style, they do, and their mills looks real imposing and modern. Bit to the south of that there's a mission church with two little towers of weather-boarding painted white sticking up above the trees, and in between the mills and the church there's a whole scattering of small shanties and a store or so.

"My," you say to yourself, "this place must be a boom town. Looks good."

But let me tell you, it's a sink-hole. All the riff-raff and loafers and beachcombers in the islands drift in to Epoviti and stay there. Those shanties, they're nothing but grog shops and more grog shops and worse—traps for the fool sailorman.

Next door to the church there's what you might call a dance-hall with a cracked mechanical piano going day and night. There's a fight or a murder every day in the week and it's so bad no decent Kanaka will go near the place at all. The others love it.

The planters don't care. They should worry about the settlement! They have their own police force and sit tight. The missionary, he may worry a bit, but he's converting Kanakas, not beachcombers. What if he did make a complaint? That sort of thing is bound to happen somewhere and Guadalcanar's the next best thing to an isolated ward.

So we anchors off this place one fine bright morning and the skipper gives us shore-leave. Hargraves takes me in tow and off we goes browsing about like a couple of schoolgirls. But a short way inland behind the settlement it's all swamp and jungle. Most unhealthy. Hot work, too. After a while we wandered back to the grog shops, but the sights we saw was too much for Hargraves.

"Awful!" says he, watching a couple of drunks lying in the middle of the track while a half-breed leper poured their whisky into his hole of a mouth. "Awful! I never imagined—never suspected! Ballard, there's a church over yonder. A cool asylum. Let's go talk to the missionary."

Which we did, and had a quiet day playing dominoes and drinking weak coffee. When the *padre* found out Hargraves wasn't an honest-to-goodness sailor, but an educated real estate man with nerves and ethics he told us all about his troubles and the good work he was doing. He was particularly proud of a kid he'd picked up away inland, the son of a chief, coal-black little beggar by the name of Kaba, with a mouth from ear to ear and solemn as a judge. Knew his prayers and so forth backwards. Gabbled them off for us even while, not so far away, you could hear the mechanical piano in the dance hall massacreing, "Sweet Rosy O'Grady."

At last I managed to wrench Hargraves loose from that cool asylum and we left the precincts, the *padre* standing by his little white gate waving to us and Kaba beside him looking very thoughtful and good.

Around the first bend in the track we came abreast of the dance hall. It was evening, the acetylene lamps was lighted, and the place was crowded to the doors with the sweetest bunch of cut-throats you ever did see.

"Take a peep through the window," says I to Hargraves. "Maybe you'll never see such a sight again in your life."

"Bah!" says he, looking in. "Disgusting!"

It was pretty bad at that. There was all sorts in there roaring, bellowing, laughing. There were Chinese coolies, and half-castes and blacks and beachcombers all mixed up in the smoke and all of 'em wild about something or other. And then there was Galvao, the owner of the place, a pasty-faced little Portuguese, with a mustache like a couple of unhealthy rat-tails stuck beneath his nose. He was moving about among the tables as we looked in and everybody was yelling at him.

He shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "Have it your own way," and claps his hands.

"Come on," says I, "if I can't have a drink I want to be moving."

"One minute," says Hargraves, "what's he clapping for?"

Just then a girl is boosted up on to a

platform in the middle of the room and a couple of guitars starts strumming.

But there was something all wrong with that girl. She stands on the platform all limp and dog-tired, her arms hanging at her sides and her head bent.

"Dance!" yelled Galvao from across the room. "Dance you little——!"

She didn't move and all at once the Portuguese whipped a knife from his belt and sent it straight at her. It struck down into the boards not an inch from her toes, and with a start she began to dance while everybody in the place screamed and all the blackguards within reach of Galvao patted him on the back.

"Seen enough?" says I. "Now you know how the other half of the world lives."

Then I took one look at Hargraves. He was standing gripping the window-sill with both hands, his mouth half-open and strange noises rumbling in his throat.

"What's wrong?" says I. "Seen a ghost?"

"Ghost!" he chokes. "Ghost—why that's a white girl in there. A white girl!"

"How so?" says I. "She's just the usual *café au lait* so far as I can judge. Come on, for the love of Mike, let's beat it."

"She's white, I tell you," declares Hargraves, very solemn. "Poor girl! Unfortunate girl! If she's not white how did she come by that hair of hers?"

So I had a look at her hair. It was color of copper—red with gold in it—and I hadn't noticed it because I wasn't much interested. But how she could dance once she was started! You've never seen anything like it. She danced with everything she had—arms and legs and head and body—just like a Kanaka. Everything moving, swaying, twisting, leaping. One second she was making snakes of her arms, the next she was touching her head with her toes.

She had on a strip of flame-colored cloth from her arm-pits to her knees and she was so tanned by the sun that at first she looked to me like an ordinary "breed." That's what fooled me. One look at her face, though, was enough to tell me that Hargraves was right. She was pretty, too, in a queer sort of way—big, long eyes, black as coal, and a snub nose, and red lips that was parted just enough to show her little white teeth, and she had no chin to speak of. There wasn't a drop of black blood in that girl's veins, but it meant nothing to me.

Says I:

"Wake up, Hargraves. What are you waiting for?"

"Look," he whispers. "She's mad about something or other. That man didn't throw the knife just for stage-effect. He meant it. And just look at her face!"

It wasn't anything to write home about except that she certainly was mad—glaring for all she was worth and showing her teeth at Galvao, but dancing all the same And then all at once she took a flying leap off the platform and headed for the door. But they stopped her, a whole mob of them, grinning at her and shouting, and I saw Galvao twist her arm as he sent her scuttling back to dance some more.

"That girl is in distress," says Hargraves in that quiet voice of his that meant trouble. "We're going to investigate."

"What do you mean 'we'," says I. "I'm going back on board the *Ruviana* as quick as can be. Anything that needs investigating in Epoviti has got to wait. I'm nobody's detective."

"We're only due to sail with the tide tomorrow morning," says Hargraves. "And that gives us plenty of time. That child is being positively tortured. Come on in with me, Ballard. Right is right, and I'm not the man to stand by and see a fellow-creature tormented like this."

"All right," says I. "You're crazy, Hargraves, but I'm game. Only let's go slow. I've been here before, and you can see for yourself how they handle their cutlery. Don't do anything rash."

So we went in and found a table in a corner where it wasn't too crowded. The girl started to shuffle again just then, but it was easy to see she was all in, tired out, barely managing to keep her feet moving, and nobody noticed us because they was busy laughing at her.

Galvao came over to us, waving his hands cheerfully and drops into a chair to have a talk, for he knew me fairly well.

"Who's the girl?" says I.

"Ah!" says he in his foreign way. "The leetle peach, eh? But the leetle tigress, too. Who is she! I do not know, nobody know! T'ree days ago I find her—so starved, so hungree, so wild!—when she come close to the house. She fight, she bite, she claw, but I hold her. Pretty, eh?"

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Galvao," purrs Hargraves, "you've enslaved this white girl?"

"No, *no*," says Galvao, sizing up Hargraves out of the corner of his eye. "No, *no!* But she is so strange girl. No speak English—no speak anything, only upland Kanaka. Nobodee understand what she say. You speak to her and she say just one word, ——, in English.

"I keep her. She make the dance two days now. Everybodee like the way she dance. You, too, yes?"

Now, if I'd been alone I'd have made tracks then and there, for I didn't fancy the saintly smile on Galvao's face. I liked my job and it liked me, and here I was trailing around after a —— knight errant full of ethics. Poor old Hargraves!

The girl, whoever she was, had stopped hopping about. She was curled up on the floor and a great black-bearded fellow was trying to make her drink some of his beer. She was crying, too, and fighting him off weak-like.

Hargraves was cool and judicial. He takes it all in as if he was at a business conference and remarks pleasantly—

"Is she free to leave this establishment at any time?"

"Surast thing you know, mister," answers Galvao, feeling for his knife. "Just as sure as I sit here so glad to meet a new friend."

"Then why," says this silly fool Hargraves, his round face beaming, "then why, when she tried to escape a few moments ago, did you restrain her?"

"*Basta!*" laughs Galvao. "She must finish the dance, not so? It is popular. Now she rest—obsairve! And suppose she go away—where she go? The poor lettle girl, no speak English, she get lost."

"My friend, I don't doubt your word," murmurs Hargraves, "but will you be kind enough to have her come over here just one minute. I should like to check up on that statement."

"Obsairve!" cries Galvao. "Obsairve, gentlemens: The leetle girl she is tired. I treat her good. Give her the food, the place to sleep. But somethings strange is about her. White girl, yes—and no speak anything but Kanaka!"

"So you've said before."

"Ah, yes! And I tell you: She speak the Kanaka of the hills, like the real savages in the mountains, so far away, so veree savage! If I bring her here to you she say ——! and that is all. You understand nothing, surast thing you know."

"I see," says Hargraves, "and what do you propose doing with her? Do you think it's ethically correct to treat her as you are doing—to let her be treated as that ruffian is treating her now?"

The ruffian wasn't so very bad. When he saw her begin to cry he cried too and even patted her shoulder most fatherly, until she made one pass at his face with her nails.

"Why don't you take her to the missionary's?" goes on Hargraves. "He would be able to care for her."

"And am I no goods?" exclaims Galvao. "I say: Am I no goods?"

Hargraves wasn't committing himself and they went on wrangling, and all the while more and more people was gathering around and making nasty comments about us. I wasn't happy and I didn't know what to do. 'Course it looked pretty bad for the girl, but it looked a darned sight worse for us. I'm no knight errant. Hargraves, however, it was easy to see, was having one splendid time. He'd burned his boats and was ready to go down fighting.

And then, all at once, I thought he'd a glimmer of intelligence. He got up and said—

"We'll be going now, Mr. Galvao."

"Back to the sheep, eh?" says the Portuguese, following us to the door, and very much relieved.

"No," answers Hargraves. "Not back to the ship, Mr. Galvao. I know a little boy who comes from one of the mountain tribes. I am going to fetch him here. He will be able to talk to this girl."

"So-ho!" says Galvao, pulling at his rattail mustache. "And if you come back here, gentlemens, I think you will be so veree soree. Go to your sheep. It is a black night and it is dangerous to be without friends in Epoviti—as you are, gentlemens."

That was enough for me. Says I:

"Hargraves, this is no place for rescue work. That guy in there would stick ten inches of steel beneath your ribs as soon as look at you. He's shown the utmost forbearance so far. I'm going!"

"You are not," says he, his fingers closing around my arm. "You must stand by me as I stood by you. I don't like to mention it, but I hope you have not forgotten Panghoumen."

"No more have I, but there's a difference."

"All right, go on then," says he reproachfully. "Go on and leave me in the lurch, for I will not leave Epoviti until I get to the bottom of this affair. I'll see it through alone. I'm going to fetch Kaba and I shall nail the lie in Galvao's throat. That girl is not a Kanaka—did you notice her eyes!"

And there you are! Against what you might call my better judgment I stayed with him. I knew by that time things was pretty hopeless, but what would you have done?

Well, sir, we had a long talk with the *padre*, who was all excited and wanted to tackle this business himself, but at last he routed out little Kaba and off we went, the three of us.

Little Kaba knew his prayers and a lot of other things besides. He trusted the brand-new God of the white men, but he wasn't making enemies of his own family spirits, for which you can't blame him much. All the way down the track he was making signs to keep off evil eyes, and blowing hard through his nose to make it hard for ghosts to creep into his lungs. He certainly hated the darkness, that kid did.

"Boost him up to the window," says I when we reached the dance hall. "Let him have a look."

"No need to do that," says Hargraves. "I'm absolutely unafraid of the scum in there. I'm going straight in."

And in he goes, holding on to Kaba's mitt. Same old place. Except that Galvao's on the platform making a speech:

"Gentlemen," he was saying, "our leetle dancer she has struck for shorter hours. Ha, ha! Funee, eh? In fact, she do not want to entertain us at all. But I think we want to see her just once more before she retires. The orchestra will now play 'The Blue Danube' as an accompaniment."

Didn't sound very funny, but everybody roars and shouts and somebody threw a couple of glasses against the wall out of sheer joy.

We'd missed our cue. There we stood in the doorway looking over the heads of the crowd and not one man noticed us. Then there's a loud yell and Galvao bends down and hauls up the girl. She's looking wicked. Got her fists on her hips and her chin stuck forward and she's saying things to the Portuguese in a tone of voice.

"Brave, splendid girl," whispers Hargraves. "Now you pick up Kaba, will you, Ballard? We'll go right up to the platform and find out all about it."

Kaba had his ears cocked up and he's grinning all over his face.

"Fine talk," says he, listening hard. "Fine talk!"

So I hoisted him up on my shoulder and Hargraves went in first, head down, bucking his way through the mob. But as soon as Kaba was up high enough to see what was going on he starts kicking and pounding and tearing at my hair. That kid was scared purple.

"She's the Tarunga-Tasi devil-priest," he screams. "She's the Tarunga-Tasi devil-priest! Oh, put me down! For the love of God, put me down!"

Sure, I let him go, I couldn't have held him on a bet. He slid like an eel down my back and was gone.

The girl heard his squeal and joined in the chorus of

"Tarunga-Tasi, Tarunga-Tasi!"

And by that time every man in the place was facing us and they looked anything but friendly. Galvao was prancing about, cursing us, waving a knife in one hand and holding on to the girl with the other. But Hargraves, for all his bulk, could think as quick as any of 'em. He picks up one of those little iron tables and swings it around his head. He led a charmed life, that man did, while it lasted. I kept close to him, for the mob closed in behind me and I couldn't very well back out.

Talk about your riots! Every so often Hargraves seemed to disappear beneath about twenty men, but he bobbed up every time, swinging his table, which was getting all twisted and bent from being wrongfully used as a club.

My shirt was torn off my back and—how it happened I don't know—but I lost a shoe and people was treading on my bare foot, which made me madder'n——.

We reached the platform. There was no time to talk.

"Tarunga-Tasi!" roars Hargraves, very apropos, to show we was friendly.

The girl answers likewise and we got her away from Galvao by stamping on his face.

Crazy business it was and all. A lunatic performance, but this asylum was anything but cool. We got out, burst clean through a window at the back of the hall and galloped away through what seemed acres of prickly bushes I'd never noticed before. The girl had a-hold of Hargraves' arm and even in the dark I could see she wasn't letting him get too far away from her. I didn't count. At last we saw the *padre's* house ahead of us all lighted up, and him holding the gate open to let us through.

AND that's how I came to desert, through no fault of my own, as you must admit. We had to spend the night inside one of the church's little white painted towers I told you about, the three of us standing there in the darkness clinging to the perishing bell while the *padre* made evasive answers to the mob down below.

He was still arguing when along about dawn, as the light began to filter in through the weather-boarding, I heard the *Ruviana* give one long whistle and I knew she was putting to sea.

No sane-minded skipper goes looking for missing men in Epoviti. Why should he waste time? They're either dead or not worth saving, except, of course, that this proposition was different. If I hadn't been tied, as you might say, to the apron strings of this —— knight errant I'd have been back on board bright and early with a few drinks inside me and ready to play pinochle with the boys.

Instead of which, just because I was a reformed character, I was standing in a church loft with about fifty of the biggest blackguards in creation howling for my blood, and at the same time being listed as a deserter liable to a fine of fifteen pounds or six months' jail or both.

That's what chivalry does for you. That's justice!

Squinting through the planks I saw the old boat puff its way around the Garowa bend and I says in a whisper to Hargraves:

"See what you've done? Just see! Ship's gone. How are we going to get away from here, that's what I want to know? You ain't a regular seaman and you got enough to live on comfortable without working, but what about me with my reputation blasted?"

"It's worth it," says he. "Well worth it, Ballard. We've saved this girl and our honor is safe."

"Tell that to a magistrate," says I, "and see what he says. Sweet lot he's going to care about my honor."

"Don't be absurd. My conscience is clear and I have no regrets. This girl's life was at stake."

"Well, and so was ours, once you got started knight-erranting," I snaps back. "Who's this girl anyway? You heard what Kaba called her: A devil-priest."

"Don't say that again," orders Hargraves. "Ballard, you must not talk like that."

Well, it was growing a bit lighter inside this belfry arrangement we was cooped up in and I could see Hargraves leaning against the wall, with one arm around the girl's middle and her head resting on his shoulder.

Whenever I see two people in that position I know it's no good trying to talk sense into their heads. That's the last thing they want to hear. But what Hargraves could see in that child of Nature is more than I can tell you. He was pink and fat and forty and sedate, whereas the girl couldn't have been more 'n about eighteen, and all she could say was ——! She said it, too, just then, but she wasn't swearing—only trying to be grateful and affectionate. Believe me, she was affectionate all right—looking at Hargraves with an "O my hero" look in her eyes.

It got him. He'd have stayed up there among the cobwebs for all eternity if the *padre* hadn't come along and told us that the coast was clear and for us to come down. That sky pilot had all the earmarks of a white man about him. He'd lied noble to save us and then before saying another word he set us in front of a —— big breakfast, only taking time to get one of these flannel mother-hubbard gowns for the girl to put on. Real thoughtful he was.

Then he scouted around for Kaba, but the kid wasn't to be found anywhere on the premises, leastways not so's you'd notice him, which made things a bit awkward, in a manner of speaking. All we got out of the girl by way of information was Eva Tanguay grins—ornamental, maybe, but that's about all. She was a queer party. It was easy to guess she'd never seen the inside of a real house before, nor a fork, nor a plate, nor anything. She went nosing around, touching things, smelling things, and giggling, but she always came back to Hargraves for comfort and protection, and every time she did so his chest expanded another inch.

Yeh! Him with the black cobwebs still sticking on to the top of his head!

Try as we might we couldn't find out a thing about her. When I said "Tarunga-Tasi," by way of jogging her memory, she squealed and clapped her hands and cavorted like a two-year-old, but that's as far as we got.

And the *padre* was worried about the whole business. He had his school to think of, he said, and he didn't want to hurry us on our way, but, perhaps, we'd better go over to Mr. Keighley, one of the planters, and work for him until we could get off the island.

"I'm only allowed to stay here on sufferance," says he, "and much as I should like to I daren't object to Galvao's ways or my church might some day be burned to the ground. But I'll keep the girl here until I can send her to the mission station at Bwauro. She's a mystery to me and, to tell the truth, I do not like mysteries. Queer things go on up in the hills, incredible things!"

"And that little wildcat is one of 'em," says I. "D'you think she's got a father or a mother or something up in those mysterious hills, or did she happen?"

"I should hesitate to answer," says the *padre*. "I have heard rumours that a white man lives up in the Mengorra valley, a white man who is said——"

"Am I to understand," puts in Hargraves, full of indignation, "that there is a *white man* so gross, so despicable as to bring up a daughter among savages? He deserves horsewhipping!"

He used elegant language, did Hargraves, once he was started, but it didn't get us anywhere. Listening to that pair talk was too strenuous for me after a night in the belfry, so I went to sleep on the *padre's* bed.

Along about sunset they woke me up and says it's time to be going over to this Keighley person's place. That was all very well, but the girl, when she found she was being left behind, which was explained to her by Hargraves acting like a man in a fit, she starts gnashing her teeth, stamping her feet, and generally making a nuisance of herself.

Then, being human, she weeps copious all over Hargraves' singlet. She didn't want to let him go! Can you beat it? It was very touching, but we got away at last, going a roundabout way through the jungle and giving Galvao's dance hall a wide berth.

All the way along Hargraves was close behind me breathing in my ear and telling me how wonderful this girl was.

"What's struck you?" says I. "What's she to do when all is said and done?"

"She wants bringing out—cultivating," says Hargraves, very thoughtful. "That's all she needs. She has brains, she has charm——"

"You're taking a lot for granted, ain't you? Why, she can't even speak English."

"Oh, that's a trivial detail," says he. "Now let's forget it."

Which I was only too pleased to do.

About a mile further on we came to a wire fence and a gate where a look-out man tried to shoot us and would have, if we hadn't had a letter of introduction from the *padre*.

That planter lived in grand style. Orphan Annie had nothing on us as we stood at the foot of the veranda steps while this Mr. —— Keighley, in his dinner coat and boiled shirt-front, read us the riot act. We wasn't popular at all. No, and he didn't care whether Hargraves had been a real estate man or not, he wasn't interested in the girl, and he positively hated me.

"I suppose I'll have to keep you," says he, tapping the floor with his foot. "But I want you to understand that I am doing it solely as a favor to the missionary. If I started taking sides in the settlement's disputes I should have no peace."

"But we aren't loafers," protests Hargraves, "and not really deserters. The very highest motives led us to——"

"They always have the highest motives," snaps back Keighley. "In the last twelve months a banker, a photographer, a school teacher and a geologist have all told me the same story, and they all ended by robbing me. I have to be suspicious."

But he finally sent us around to his foreman who bedded us down in an out-house next door to the stables and told us to sleep sound for he'd have plenty of work for us to do in the morning.

That suited me. Everything was quiet and peaceful. There was a half-moon riding up over the top of the palm trees and an engine was purring away as steady as could be.

Next thing I knew the foreman was tickling my ribs with his boot. Says he—

"Where's your mate?"

"I dunno," says I. "He was lying beside me snoring with his mouth open last I heard of him. Maybe he's outside washing. He does it regular."

"Not he," says the foreman. "He's gone."

And so he was, for I found a note pinned to my shirt-front—it's over there in my wet clothes—but I know it by heart. It said:

> "Little Tarunga came for me in the night. She followed us all the way from the mission! ! I have gone with her to her father who, I gather, lives inland. She has promised to marry me! ! At least I think that is what she means when she looks up into my eyes. You may think it odd that I should see fit to go to her father, but I feel it is my duty to do so. Please wait for me. I think it would be appropriate if the missionary married us, and I should like you to be my best man. Tarunga urges me to make haste. Au revoir! !"

"He-haw!" says the foreman, reading over my shoulder. "And who might this Tarunga be?"

When I told him he stops grinning and scratches the back of his head.

"Tarunga is not the gurl's proper name," says he. "Tarunga-Tasi, it is, and they are a wild, mischeevious tribe at the far end of the Mengorra valley, so I hear. But it is none of my concern. I have never heard of a white man, let alone a white gurl, living on amicable terms with that tribe."

"Well," says I, "I hope Hargraves has a nice, pleasant time of it all and stays away, for he's got me into more trouble with his darn moral principles than I ever met with before in my life."

Which was almost true in a manner of speaking. I'm off these here moral principles for life. If Hargraves hadn't been so handy with his fists he'd never have roped me in. Muscles and morals is a dangerous combination. And see where it all landed him: First he deserts, and me with him, and then he goes off with a red-headed girl of unknown origin to ask for her pa's consent. No man in his right mind would act like that, but then Hargraves he lived in woolly clouds of ethics and he never saw the ground.

Be that as it may, I was more than pleased to see the last of him for a while. I was quite ready to let bygones be bygones and live peaceful for a while.

But it wasn't to be. Soon after I started to work helping the storeman I was ordered to report at the house, and who should I find sitting there with Keighley but the *padre* with little Kaba close beside him.

He'd lost the girl and he wanted to know all about it. When I showed him the bit of paper he shook his head and looked very mournful.

"Kaba has told me about this girl," says he. "Kaba hid under my bed after seeing her at Galvao's. The girl, apparently, is the daughter of a white man who has become chief of the Tarunga-Tasi, and he must be a very terrible man indeed for he is always raiding Kaba's tribe and carrying off prisoners."

"What does it matter?" puts in Keighley, looking black as thunder. "The whole affair is a nuisance. The girl has gone back to her own kind and this good-for-nothing loafer has gone with her. Let 'em go!"

"Not so," says the *padre*. "Hargraves is not a loafer, he has simply lost his head, and now he is risking death in the Mengorra Valley."

"And what do you propose doing?" snaps Keighley. "I'm a busy man."

"I am going up after Hargraves," says the *padre*, "and I am going up after the girl. I think Ballard will go with me. That's right, isn't it, Ballard?"

"I don't think Mr. Keighley can spare me," says I. "We're mighty busy in the store-room——"

"You're fired," howls Keighley. "What do you know about my store-room?"

That's all the thanks I got for being loyal to my employer and not wanting to waste his time—and he didn't even pay me half a day's wages! He'd have made a Socialist of me, that guy would, if I hadn't thought I might own my own schooner some day. Still I couldn't see myself chasing around after the elopers. So I said:

"All right, I'll wander over to Epoviti and wait there for a boat. It's all the same to me."

"Ah!" murmurs the *padre*. "I don't advise you to do that. Suit yourself, of course, but Galvao is in a violent temper, a very violent temper. Should he find you——"

That settled it. I hadn't a friend.

"When do we leave?" says I.

IT TOOK us three mortal days to reach Kaba's village, and don't go talking about rough country until you've traveled through the hills of Guadalcanar. The tracks are about a foot wide between thick walls of jungle and you can't see the sky for the trees. Hot! It's a steam bath all the way. You drag along—first you're bogged to the knees in the swamps, then you're hanging by your nails to the side of a cliff. I'm a sailor, not a shammy goat. Sometimes the trees opened out and let you see the country beyond, but it wasn't to my liking: Just hills and a blazing sky. By day it was all quiet, empty-like, but at night the place woke up and you could hear the tribes talking to each other from hill to hill on their big drums.

When we reached the village the whole tribe turned out to greet us. They was friendly, in a manner of speaking, and much too democratic. No elbow room. Kept shoving in close while we sat talking with Kaba's father. They was all eyes—sat there staring at us as if we was on exhibition, and though nothing went wrong I couldn't help wondering what would happen if they took exception to our remarks.

We didn't find out much we didn't know except that the Tarunga-Tasi tribe had made a raid on Kaba's people about a month earlier. The girl, it appeared, had been with the party, all dolled up and painted to look like a ghost, but she'd been cut off and chased half-way down to the coast.

"Which explains her presence in Epoviti," says the *padre*. "Probably lost her way."

Then we tried to hire an escort to go with us to the Tarunga-Tasi country, but they wouldn't hear of it. They knew when they was well off and when to let well enough alone, those niggers did. At last, after giving the old man a couple of pounds of tobacco, we got the loan of Kaba. Nobody really cared what happened to the kid and he felt too superior to stay at home any longer than he had to.

So we went on and the track became worse. We tramped along the bottom of a black gorge between sheer cliffs and then we began to climb. Around about noon, when we reached a shoulder on the hill-side where it was fairly level and not too woody, Kaba stops and whispers to us—

"Over there in that tree, there is a man watching."

Sure enough there was. Away at the top of a tree, something like a pine, there was a small platform and I could make out a Kanaka leaning over the edge.

"Perhaps he hasn't spotted us," says I.

"It doesn't matter if he has," says the *padre*. "We must be found sooner or later. They might as well be expecting us."

It was rough going, all boulders and rocks and no shade to speak of. Kaba begins to snivel. He'd cut his foot on a stone and he wanted to go home in the worst way. So I showed him my gun and told him how easy it would be to wipe out the village with it—I had only six bullets and never could shoot straight—and the kid cheered up considerably.

"What's more," says I, "you're a big man and our interpreter. Just show these folks you're as brave as they are."

After that he stepped out with his chin in the air, surer of himself by a darned sight than I was of myself. And the *padre* was as mild as ever. Never complained, just went straight ahead. He didn't know the meaning of fear.

They was expecting us, all right, in that village. Whole crowd of 'em lining the way, peering at us, and an awful bunch they was too. Lean and hungry-looking, men and women alike, except that the women had their hair clipped short while the men wore theirs thick and bushy like mushrooms.

"Lead us to your chief," sings out Kaba under orders from the *padre*.

They said not a word, just pointed toward a split-bamboo stockade in the center of the huts.

And in there, on a mat spread beneath a banyan tree, we found him—this chief. He was white, no mistake about that, but if a white man can go that way I'd rather be first cousin to a rang-tang. He was shaped like a hairy barrel with great knotted arms that hung down to his knees, he had no neck to speak of, and his little brute's head was the nastiest thing I've ever seen: All jaw and eyebrows and a big smear of a mouth. He had on nothing much but dirt and a strip of dark cloth.

There was a bunch of men sitting about watching us and a few women roasting food in an oven, and a couple of pigs and some chickens rooting around.

Well, this fellow he sits with his feet under his knees like a heathen idol and he says nothing while the *padre* talks and talks. Soon the *padre* began to get a bit rattled and he was pleading faster and faster until all at once who should come skipping out of one of the huts but that red-headed girl. Seeing us she claps her hands and comes over to fawn on us, smoothing our wrists and rubbing up against our arms and miouwing like a young cat. Kaba, at the sight of her, hides between my legs and starts to howl.

"Where is Hargraves?" asks the *padre*. "Is he here? We are hunting for him. Won't you please tell us if he came up here?"

Very slowly our friend on the mat starts to grin, like a wolf-dog showing its teeth, drawing his lips way back off his gums.

"Hargraves," says he, speaking slowly and choosing his words. "Hargraves is here. Yes, he is here."

And he starts roaring with laughter until the hair on the back of my neck began to stand on end. He was keeping his eyes on Kaba, laughing at the kid, leaning forward to look at him, his fingers working like claws—blunt claws with the nails bitten down to the quick and black.

"It's all right," says I to the kid. "He won't hurt you. Remember the gun."

"Gun?" snarls the chief. "Gun? You got a —— gun?"

"Sure," says I, "right here in my pocket where it can be used without trouble. Now produce Hargraves."

"Look behind you," grunts the chief, "before you try to shoot."

I looked: Behind us was six of his men with their spears leveled at the small of our backs.

"Now shoot," shrieks the rang-tang. "Shoot!"

And I kept perfectly quiet for one spear point was rubbing through my shirt to my ribs.

"This is no way to treat your fellow-men," began the *padre*.

"Fellow-men," yaps the chief, wild with anger and spitting out a stream of betel juice. "I ain't got fellow-men, only enemies! Listen: Don't come here to lord it over me. Once I was like you, white like you—a soft fool like you. I was a trader once—and I killed a man for speaking too much to my wife. Broke his neck. That was right: To kill like that! But the police came after me. Tracked, hunted, always running, always afraid, I turned away from your breed, I came here. These are my fellow-men. You ——!"

He had a filthy tongue all right.

"Your wife is here?" asked the *padre*, cool as ever.

"Yes," says the chief. "Over there beneath them bushes, since Tilda was born. Yes, she is here, watching you. ——! How she hated you, just as I do."

"And where is Hargraves?" insisted the *padre*.

The chief speaks to his daughter and she runs away toward a sort of pig-pen backed up against the stockade. A couple of men helps her drag something out and prop it on its feet and haul it our way.

It was Hargraves, but do you know what those —— had done to him? What that fiend of a rang-tang had done to him? Torn out his eyes—clean out of his head. The blood had caked on his cheeks and the flies wouldn't leave him alone. His head was black with 'em. He could barely stand up; the two men held him beneath the arms and he stumbled along, moaning at each step.

"He wanted my daughter," snarls the chief, "and she thought she wanted him. Now he can have her if he can find her, but she's through with him.

At the sound of that voice Hargraves winced and then went sort of mad. He tore away from his guards and groped about like a man swimming against a strong current, going round in a circle as he tried to get at the chief. It scared me silly to see him as he was and remember what he'd been like only four days before.

The *padre* couldn't stand it. He calls out:

"Here we are, Hargraves. Right over here—your friends!"

At that Hargraves wheels around and opens his mouth, trying to talk. But he had no tongue. They'd cut it out! I can still hear that cry of his, trying to speak, trying to tell us to get away. Poor old Hargraves! That black empty hole and the gurgle that came out of it!

That girl stood not six feet away from him grinning—the little ghoul—grinning at the wreck her people had made of as good a man as ever was. And I daren't move, for the spear point was eating into my back, boring in.

"See him!" yells the chief, working himself up into a rage, and pounding the ground with his fists as he leaned over toward us. "That was to show Tilda that he was not a god but a man, a —— white man. She doesn't want him now. He's only fit for the ovens, the long fat pig that he is."

I had nothing to say for I was feeling sick, but the *padre* was different. He let go with all he had and he thundered at that renegade, cursing him by all the gods there are. It was growing dusk and unnoticed I slid my hand very gradually toward my pocket. There was two things I wanted to do: Put Hargraves out of his misery and get that chief, then I didn't much care what happened.

Kaba was holding fast to my legs with both hands, whimpering and watching the chief get madder and madder as the *padre* talked.

Just then Hargraves flopped down on the ground and lay there sort of panting and groaning. It was an awful sight.

"I'll shoot now," thinks I, making a move to slip my hand in my pocket.

But a Kanaka caught my arm and twisted it up behind me. He had my gun away from me in a second and handed it over to the chief, who was acting more than ever like an ape—scratching at the dirt with his nails and baying at the *padre* in a voice that certainly wasn't human.

All I could think of was Hargraves, lying there squirming in the dust, and the girl staring at him as if he was some kind of slug. It only struck me then that she wasn't quite straight in the head, for she was giggling and sucking at her thumb as she watched that awful thing grovel before her.

The whole confab was beyond me. I wasn't paying much attention to any of it when the chief shouts out:

"There is your friend Hargraves! He wanted my girl. That's the price he has to pay for her. Fat and strong he was. He tried to fight us. *Hai!* The long pig, he tried to fight."

And he slavered at the mouth and glared at Kaba.

"Yes," says he, "and I'll show you how we treat them as fight us—and treat you the same way!"

Then he said something to the Kanakas behind us, and we was herded over to that pig-pen and driven in. They threw Hargraves in atop of us and put a guard outside.

It didn't seem real until I heard Hargraves' breath rattling in his throat and the *padre* murmuring over him.

The Kanakas was lighting coconut-oil lamps and hanging them in the branches of the banyan tree. The whole village was inside the stockade—all those hungry-looking men and women, cowering before the blast of that foul white man's voice. What they were going to do was only too plain: They was digging a pit like a grave and singing as they dug it. When Kaba heard them he whispered to me:

"They say they eat—they eat soon! Eat him—" he meant Hargraves—"and me. Chief say ——"

"Stop it," says I. "You're morbid. Wait and let me think."

Out of the darkness came the *padre's* voice:

"O Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of men made perfect after they are delivered from their earthly prisons——"

I'd heard the prayer of the dying before then and I never liked it. Dying can't be helped. If it happens quick it ain't so bad—. But this lingering business!

Through the door of the hut I could see the red-headed girl squatting by her father's side chewing *kava* for him and laughing at what he was saying. She frightened me more than her old man—that white face of hers and queer black eyes.

The *padre* crept over and touched my shoulder and I jumped about a mile.

"Ssh," says he. "Hargraves is gone now. He passed out a second ago."

"He's all right then," says I. "And I'm glad to hear it. But what about us?"

That *padre* was a good lad. He put something in my hand, which turned out to be a gun. Him toting a gun! That goes to show how broad-minded he was.

"I thought you might need it," says he. "When our time comes, and it's coming soon, I want you to turn that weapon against me and, if you think fit, against Kaba. I don't want to be experimented upon."

"Our time ain't coming," says I. "Not if it can be helped."

And then Kaba wriggles up to us and reports that the bamboo stockade wasn't as strong as it might have been. The kid had found a hole in it, just about a foot wide. I'll bet Hargraves made that hole, but we finished it.

The stuff was brittle and crackled as we tore at it. Kaba slipped through the opening. To let the *padre* through we had to make the hole a bit bigger and the guard heard us. He poked his head in to see what was happening and I shot him right in the face. That was no time for an argument.

"Beat it," says I to the *padre*. "I'll be right after you in a second or so."

I saw the chief spring up and come toward us at a run, leaping through the air and hollering, and followed by the whole of his gang. I waited until he was close enough not to miss and I plugged him twice. Then I squirmed through the hole, leaving bits of my skin on the bamboo points, and we traveled.

How or why we got away I don't know, but the fact remains that we did. Kaba led the way. We went rolling down the hill-side with only the moon to guide us and what seemed hours later we drew up in a glade.

"I think we're safe," says the *padre*.

"Maybe," says I, "but I long for Epoviti. It's one lovely place."

And who do you think came racing out behind us? Why, the girl, her hair streaming out behind her and her upturned face all blue in the moonlight. She came close, bridling a little and smoothing her hips with her hands. She wasn't a bit fussed or upset, let alone out of breath. She came closer yet and I found myself looking into her eyes. Then I understood why Hargraves went off his nut. All I could see was those eyes, growing bigger and blacker, bigger and blacker, and I couldn't think because of them.

I was nailed where I stood, gaping at her.

"The devil-priest!" squeals Kaba. "It's the devil-priest!"

"Come along," says the *padre*. "We can't afford to stay here. Kaba, ask her if she wants to come down to my place."

She didn't want to. Just keeps staring at me and plucking at my sleeve, and I started back toward the village, going against my will, but going all the same.

I heard the *padre* shout:

"Ballard, don't do that. Don't forget what happened to Hargraves!"

I stopped short, trying to remember who Hargraves might be, and all at once it dawned on me. I fought clear of those eyes and stepped back. As I did so the girl shot past me and dug her fingers into the *padre's* throat. Crazy mad she was. Try as I might I couldn't drag her off. She held on as if her arms were made of steel and I could not make her let go.

Then I heard a call, far away up the hill-side, and the girl, throwing back her head, answered it.

I don't blame Kaba for calling her a devil-priest. She was that and a lot more besides. What could I do? What would you have done? For the *padre* was black in the face and going fast. Why I shot that girl with the last bullet in the gun and I put an end to the last of that dreadful clan. Perhaps I did wrong, the *padre* seemed to think so, but I'm not so very sorry.

Well, sir, we shook off those Kanakas and crawled back to the coast somehow or other, me with a fever which kept me delirious most of the way.

And that's how I came to desert. All along of poor old Hargraves who got caught by those eyes because he was so darn sure of himself and too good to last.

I can't tell all this to a magistrate. He'd say I was mad or a liar. But even so I had to get back to paved streets and houses and the smell of gas for a while—couldn't stand the islands for another day. So instead of shipping on a trading schooner, which I could have done, I stowed away on a steamer. Stowed away on the *Ruviana*. Say, she's one good boat—made the crossing in five days. Five days in a coal-bunker! Lordy!

SAY, give a fellow a shilling and I'll go buy us some real beer. My throat's as dry as dust.

THE MALE SIREN'S CHANTEY

by Edward A. Morphy

COME along o' me, me lad—to sea, me lad—to sea, me lad.
Come along o' me, me lad, and take a look at Chiney.
Come an' see the wonderlands,
The Hatoba and Bunder-lands,
The Liverpools an' Sunderlands
Of all the bloomin' briny.
Come along o' me, me lad, an' lay a course for Chiney.

Come along o' me, me lad—to sea, me lad—to sea, me lad.
Come along o' me, me lad, to Chiney where the jade is—
Monkey-nuts an' temple bells,
Almon' eyes an' merry hells;
On the road to Bubblin' Wells
I'll show you pretty ladies.
Come along o' me, me lad, to Chiney where the jade is.

Come along o' me, me lad—to sea, me lad—to sea, me lad.
Come along o' me, me lad, an' see the Dolly Vardens—
Moosmies out Negishi way,
Donahs at San Felipe,
Smoky angels makin' hay
Of hearts in Eden Gardens—
Sparkin' while the sodjers play
The band in Eden Gardens.
Come along o' me, me lad, an' see the Dolly Vardens.

Come along o' me, me lad—to sea, me lad—to sea, me lad.
Come along o' me, me lad, an' be a jolly rover;
Smell the spice at Singapore,
Hit the ice on Labrador,
Love in fifty ports, an' more,
All the oceans over.
Come along o' me, me lad, an' be a jolly rover.

PIRATES AND PRISONS OF "CRUSOE'S ISLE"

by **John L. Considine**

JUAN FERNANDEZ, of Robinson Crusoe celebrity, is a small island in the South Pacific, some four hundred or five hundred miles west of Valparaiso. It is also called *Mas-à-Tierra*—nearer-the-mainland—to distinguish it from *Mas-à-Fuero*—farther-off-shore—which is nearly one hundred miles farther west.

It was discovered in 1563 by Juan Fernandez, a hardy Spanish sailor, who obtained a grant of his find from the Spanish Government. He wearied of it in time and went, leaving a herd of pigs and goats. The descendants of these animals helped to make the island popular a century later with British pirates, in search of fresh meat and water.

After an unsuccessful attempt to surprize La Serena, Pirate Sharpe and his men anchored off Juan Fernandez. The shore was so thickly covered with seals that they had to shoot some before they could land. The sailors marked Christmas day by shooting sixty goats, and besides the pigs slaughtered for present needs, one hundred were salted down. A sailor with a bare hook in an hour or two caught enough fish for all the crew. There was an abundant supply of timber, palms, sandalwood, and wild quince, very little of which were to be found two centuries later.

In October, 1704, the galley, *Cinque Ports*, of Dampier's squadron, called at Juan Fernandez. A quarrel arose between Captain Straddling and his sailing-master, Alexander Selcraig or Selkirk, native of the little fishing-town of Largo, in Fifeshire, who refused to serve longer with his captain and asked to be put on shore. But, finding himself alone on the beach with some stores, his courage fell and he begged permission to return aboard. But Straddling only laughed at him and left him.

After nearly four years and a half of solitude, he was taken off the island, February, 1709, by Captain Wood Rogers, of the privateer, *Duke*. Selkirk was appointed mate of the *Duke*, and died (1723) lieutenant of the king's ship, *Weymouth*. In 1868 the navy vessel, *Topaze*, visited Juan Fernandez and erected a tablet to his memory at a spot known as Selkirk's Lookout, and in 1885 a monument was erected to his memory in his native place.

The island seems to have had a strong appeal for sailors of that day, for the next visitor, Captain Clipperton, of the *Success*, lost four men by desertion, two of whom were recaptured before the vessel left. Captain Shelvocke, another eighteenth century privateer, who lost the *Speedwell* and had to build another vessel out of its wreckage, parted with a number of his men here. Eleven sailors and thirteen Indians and blacks refused to leave the island, telling him that they were "not yet prepared for the other world."

The Spaniard, Ulloa, who visited the island in 1743, was struck by the number of dogs, especially greyhounds, he saw. They had been sent by the Chilian and Peruvian Governments to exterminate the goats and put an end to the pirates' meat supply. But the goats were too well skilled in climbing rocky heights to fear the greyhounds.

Ulloa's advice to the Spanish Government to fortify the island and convert it into a penal settlement was finally followed. The governorship seems to have been looked upon as one of the plums of the Spanish service.

During the South American revolutions many Chilian and Peruvian patriots were exiled there. Afterward the Chilian Government continued it as a penal colony, until 1835, after which it was leased to private persons.

The traveler who climbs the brow of a hill fronting the harbor, barely half a mile from the landing-place, will still find traces of these relics of cruelty. The face of the cliff is excavated to a distance of several hundred feet, and long winding passages lead to dripping cells, where convicts were immured. Beneath these are other cells, darker, colder, and smaller—not more than five feet in length by six in height—which were reserved for the worst offenders.

BATTLING BUTCH GETS HIS

by Gordon Young

Author of "On the Waterfront," "Standish of the Star Y," etc.

"OO THE bloomin'——yer think yer is?" demanded 'Arry Coy, wrinkling his nose with a sniffing movement as he eyed the large gentleman of pugilistic countenance that stood beside the restaurant table, one of his ham-like hands grasping the arm of 'Arry's dinner guest and the other, knotted into a fist about the size of a capstan drumhead, advanced to within a few inches of 'Arry's bird-like nose.

'Arry's question was insulting, and so intended. Everybody knew the "Battling Butcher," king-pin tough of the Frisco tenderloin; or at least "Butch" felt they should know him. He was a terror, or tried to be, in the ring and a worse one out of it.

'Arry knew more than that. He knew that Butch was the close friend of Joe Lane, proprietor of the Anchor Chain, sailor-robber, vendor of knock-out drops; and a night or two before Joe Lane had mysteriously disappeared. The last seen of him by his friends was when he had taken three sailors into a back room of the Anchor Chain to give them doped booze under the pretense of standing treat.

But Joe Lane had nothing to do with the present situation. This was a personal matter between the Battling Butcher and 'Arry Coy; and 'Arry, though a runt of a Cockney, had courage big enough to fill anybody's shoes. But the bravest terrier that ever lived couldn't chew up a fighting mastiff, and as far as size went 'Arry was the runt of a terrier litter, though dog lovers might have objected to comparing Butch to a fighting mastiff. Mastiffs don't hunt in gangs or chew up little dogs. In fact most dogs are gentlemen in that they never bite a lady or pick on a little fellow.

'Arry wished that he had been born a giant. He would have liked to lay this big boy out with a wallop, then kick him into the street before the eyes of his lovely dinner guest.

He wished for the formidable presence of Dick Webster and the Duke, ship mates, and the proper men for any kind of fight.

But Webster had taken himself off to some gambling joint, and Duke was moodily drinking six dollars a pint champagne by himself in their room. The Duke hated women and loved wine of a subtlely flavored vintage.

'Arry was the gallant one of the brotherhood, and taking his share of the small bag of gold that had fallen at their feet as a sort of unexpected reward when they shanghaied Joe Lane, the sailor-robber, on board the ship of his worst enemy, 'Arry had fared forth to give a blonde dance-hall girl the time of her young life.

But unfortunately it happened that

Mazie Blazie, as the fair one called herself, held Butch's affections in her keeping. And Butch, hearing from ever-ready tattlers that Miss Blazie was stepping out, had taken up the trail. The fact that he went on the war-path by himself may be taken as reason to believe that he had been furnished with a description of 'Arry's appearance and weight.

Anyhow, he had swaggered with determined mien through the doors of Doloust's Restaurant, swaggered down the aisle between tables, shoved aside the waiters that offered to direct him to a table; then like an ogre in a fairy tale, he seized upon Mazie Blazie and was about to carry her off.

Miss Blazie, of course, had cried out as if in great fear. She may have been; but she would have cried out anyway. She was the sort that loves publicity; had she been an actress her jewels would have been stolen, she would have sued for breaches of promise, been in numerous narrow escapes from death, and in other ways have brought herself before the public.

Miss Blazie was a sunshiny blonde, rather straw-colored, somewhat over-weight, with a lot of colored ribbons hanging at loose ends about her. She had a slightly turned-up nose, washed-out eyes, hand-reddened cheeks and big feet, but otherwise was rather pretty and had the manners of a kitten, a large and well-fed kitten.

"Hi said 'oo the —— yer think yer is?" 'Arry Coy repeated, standing up, standing up on tip-toes in fact, but that didn't help much.

He glared defiantly into the large, badly formed face of the jealous Butcher.

"I've caught you, you English shrimp. Now I'll——"

Miss Blazie screamed:

"Ow—ow don't kill him, Butch! Don't kill 'im!"

This was probably the most dramatic moment in her life, and she was not letting her knowledge that Butch did not intend to kill him interfere with her pleasure. She squawked again, and so loudly that diners who had paused with food half-way up, dropped their forks and jumped to their feet, the better to see and hear.

"F'r two cents I'd step on you, you English shrimp!" Butch shouted, thrusting forward his jaw and glaring savagely.

"Don't hurt 'im! Don't hurt 'im, Butch! Oh my —— don't hurt him!"

Everybody in the crowded restaurant was listening, and many were crowding close. The Battling Butcher liked an audience.

"Listen," said the redoubtable one in a loud voice. "Listen, an' I'll tell you somethin'. I'm goin' let you off, see? I c'd crack you like a monkey cracks a flea, see? But you beat it, see? I'll stay right here an' eat what you've ordered, but you pay for it. You pay for it *now*, see? I'll let you off, but I'll eat your dinner jus' to teach you a lesson. See?"

There were a few approving snickers at Butch's poetical sense of justice, and some words of good-natured comment tossed about. What had looked like a tragedy was turned into a joke, and there were some among those in Doloust's who would readily have licked the boots of the Battling Butcher.

In Doloust's the sugar bowls were sugar bowls, full of granulated sugar; and one of these suddenly flew up and emptied itself in Butch's face, filling his nose, his mouth, his eyes, blinding him, stinging him, choking him; and the next instant the English shrimp was breaking a chair over the Butcher's thick head.

Miss Blazie yelled earnestly. Other girls joined in the screeching.

Rescue work started on Butch's behalf. 'Arry might have got off easily, but he appeared to resent outside interference; and for a moment or two he created much the same stir that a whirlwind creates in a straw-pile.

Odds were hopelessly against him. It was held ill-bred and ungentlemanly to break furniture over a patron's head at Doloust's. Besides, 'Arry was a foreigner—so the French waiters lunged for him from all sides. A heavy-fisted diner or two took a crack at him. He fought back, and won a surprizingly lot of glory in Miss Blazie's eyes. He had been a good sport. He was *so* small. And he was putting up the sort of fight that appealed to her sentimental heart in view of the fact that she had long carried the secret hope that somebody would some day knock the Butcher's block off.

'Arry was kicked, cuffed, batted and shunted to somewhere near the door. He made a dive partly under his own power and partly with assistance from the rear and hit the sidewalk; and he did not stop to count his bumps. He made off at a gallop.

II

WHEN 'Arry came into the room where the three sailors lived he would hardly have known himself had he appeared unexpectedly before a mirror.

Both eyes were discolored and one was closed tight as a miser's fist; a cheek was badly rasped; his hat was gone, and the hair on one side of his head was matted from a whack on the scalp. His clothes were torn and bursting at the seams. His lips were cut and swollen. His face was dirty and blood-smeared.

The Duke eyed him with grave disapproval.

"Hi 'ad an hargument wiv a bloke, Hi did."

"And he hit you with a syllogism, I suppose," said Duke with slow serious emphasis.

'Arry looked at him with a bird-like doubtfulness. He was suspicious of the Duke's education. The Duke had a way of making a monkey out of a fellow.

The Duke, now being in one of his black moods, lounged with a manner of brooding dejection in a rocking-chair beside a table of that golden varnished variety known as a "stand." On this stand was a tumbler and an empty champagne bottle or two; strewn about the floor were many empty pint champagne-bottles.

Also on the floor at Duke's feet was a galvanized wash-tub. In the tub was a large cake of ice. Surrounding the ice were bottles of champagne, snuggling down into melted depressions, getting thoroughly chilled.

Duke was never seen wholly drunk, and when the black mood was on him, never wholly sober. He wasn't a solitary drinker, and even when blue as an old soak's nose would have welcomed friends; but he disliked strangers, and at all times he avoided women. He had invested practically all of his part of the reward money in champagne. All day long and most of the night he sat, brooded, sipped the honey-colored juice of sun-impregnated grape, and grew blacker of thought, more depressed in manner, more bitter of tongue.

He had turned his dark eyes, heavy with sleeplessness, with moody blackness, and the weight of grapes, toward 'Arry, regarding him with exaggerated dignity for a time; then he pointed at a newspaper strewn about the floor.

"Did Joe Lane catch you?"

" 'Im catch me? Yer drunker than yer look. 'E's a good thousand mile hoff."

"He isn't two miles off."

"Wot!"

"He escaped from the *Grace Murdock* before she cleared the Gate. Got aboard the tug. He knew Captain Poole would kill him before the voyage was over."

" 'Oly Judas! Wot the pyper tell habout it?"

Duke with slow, almost ceremonious movements opened another bottle, and gravely watched the singing bubbles as he poured wine fit for an alderman's banquet into a hash-house tumbler.

"The papers—the papers say that he was lying low for a few days in the hope of disdiscovering the whereabout of the ruffians—that means you, Harry; you are the ruffian—who attempted to shanghai him. Yes. But you and Verlaine and I know that Joe Lane was keeping well under cover until he was sure that the *Grace Murdock* would not put back into the bay. Captain Poole himself would have come ashore looking for him. All because of a runaway wife. Woman that would run away with a man like Lane not worth fighting over. No woman worth fighting over. Were you fighting over a woman?"

Duke asked the questions with brooding severity; and added before 'Arry answered:

"Don't lie to me. It's always over a woman. Yes. Yes. When I see a man in your disgraceful condition—disgraceful—I know a woman's fine Italian hand has been at work on him."

"She's no dago. She's Hamerican!"

'Arry was almost indignant.

"She was false to me, Duke. Hi was spendin' my larst penny hon 'er—my larst 'un!" he added sadly, looking wistfully at his feet through what aperture was left in his one eye.

"They are all false. False. False as the courage that's in wine—in wine; and as sweet to the taste. That's why, that's why I like dry wine. Don't want to be reminded o' woman, o' sweet women. No."

" 'Ow, but she was purty, Duke. Yer wouldn't think it hof 'er to be false. Yer wouldn't think it, wiv 'er beauty."

Duke made a gestural flourish, and spoke with great dignity and a slight unsteadiness:

"Beauty is perishable—perishable as the bub-bubbles blown by a drowning man. And false—as false as a woman's vows. I know. Yes. I know. I—I had a friend—a friend, un'erstand? *Friend.* Good friend. Knew him well as I know myself. Jus' as well. He was young and, and rich, and had no sense, and ever'thing that many a woman says she likes in a man. An' she was beautiful; so beautiful some-something *had* to be wrong with her. Always is when they're so beautiful. R'm'ber that Harry, r'm'ber that. You don't get drunk on vinegar. No. And ugly woman never ruins a man. Never! This girl you fought over was beautiful you say?"

" 'Ow Duke, like a bloomin' dream when yer've been six months to sea!"

Duke shook his head in sympathetic sadness; then bent over the tub and with cautious deliberation, as if one bottle differed from another—which it didn't—selected two from the ice.

Wrapping a bath-towel about one he inserted a long corkscrew and in a moment there was a cheerful *plop*, and sparkling liquor foamed into the heavy tumbler.

"Here, Harry, my son, be wise. Drown yourself in—in bubbles. Women fool you, but good ol' bubble juice never fools you. No. You always know you're goin' have a —— of a headache in the mornin'. Yes."

"Ugh! 'Ow yer drink this, Hi don't know," said 'Arry, putting down the half-emptied tumbler. "Bli' me if Hi do. It's *sour!*"

"Dry, you idiot!"

"Hi am dry. Hi 'm going to wash hup a bit, then go get me some 'arf and 'arf, Hi am. Hi don't like this stuff."

Duke gave him a look of aloof contempt; but 'Arry was blind in one eye, and with the other was busily examining himself in a mirror, so he did not notice.

"Sye Duke, 'ow the bloomin' —— did Joe Lane get off the *Gryce Murdock?* Them sylers would 'ave watched 'im like a bloody 'awk."

"He says—" Duke vaguely pointed toward the scattered paper— "he gave the crew his diamonds to help him sneak over the side and board the tug."

"There! There!" cried 'Arry, greatly excited. "Wot yer got to sye now? It was yer fault, Duke. Hi wanted hus to keep them sparklers. Yer know Hi did. We'd been rich, an' Joe Lane wouldn't 'ave been back in Frisco wiv hall 'is friends lookin' for hus!"

"That would have been stealing," Duke answered severely. "Stealing, un'erstand? And I wasn't tempted at all because those 'sparklers' as you call them—those 'sparklers' were paste!"

" 'Oly Judas! Er yer sure, Duke?"

"Sure? Of course I am sure. Paste they were."

"The dirty dog!" 'Arry cried. "Cheatin' sylers like that. Givin' 'em phony sparklers to save 'is —— life!"

'Arry, washing and scrubbing himself, made frequent profane sounds as the water stung a raw place; and when he had, after a fashion, put himself together, he went out again. Several dollars remained in his pocket and he would be restless and uneasy until they were spent.

III

IN THE back room of the Anchor Chain Joe Lane was talking earnestly with three rough, tough, heavily built men.

Lane wasn't drinking; but the three men shuffled a whisky bottle back and forth, tipping it before small glasses that they filled to a beaded brim and gulped as if about to swallow glass and all.

They were the second mate, the boatswain and a sour-faced hand off the tramp *Valentine*, which was leaving for Melbourne in the morning. Like most of the ships on the bay at this time, the *Valentine* was short handed.

Lane bit his words with frequent clenching of jaw, and as he talked he waggled his fist, striking the table, striking his palm, striking the air. He was in a vengeful, almost deadly, earnestness, and did not have his usual prosperous *debonair* appearance. He even looked a little shrunken about the face. His wonderful black-dyed and curled mustache was gone. Only a bristling stubble remained. No brilliants sparkled on his fingers. He was excited.

"—they're in that room tanking up on champagne. I got on to them through Tousers, where they bought a case o' champagne. Had it sent up to this room. The fellow—that Duke, he is the leader—what bought it said he wasn't going to budge till it was drunk. I sent a guy up to make inquiries o' the landlady, and it's them all right. I bet you find 'em, soaked. Wallop 'em good, and stop here on your way back. Come down the alley. Nobody'll see you. Nobody'll say nothing if they do see you. They're shipmates an' drunk——"

"Aw, we know all that," said the burly mate hoarsely, with a touch of drunken impatience at being advised as if he were a child.

"—an' when you stop here I'll give you fifty dollars each, like I said."

"Why don'tchu pay us now—pay us now. We'll go through with it. We'll go through with anything, eh Bill?"

Bill, the boatswain growled—

"—— yes."

"Besides we need men," said the mate. "We want 'em. We'll go get 'em. Pay us now why don'tchu?"

"I'll pay you when you stop here on your way back to the ship. I want to take just one punch a-piece at 'em—just one good punch. That's what I want. That's what I'm payin' for! Now you boys go get 'em, an' get 'em right!"

"Leave it to us, eh Bill?"

"Right-o! Let's have another drink o' this —— fire, an' then we'll shove off."

So they had another drink, then started just the least little bit unsteadily on their way. They didn't know San Francisco very well, and had to stop frequently to make inquiries; and when they stopped they took a drink of tanglefoot to help them on their way to Mrs. Vrooman's rooming-house.

IV

H'ARRY had not been gone long from the room when there came a hurried light knock at the door.

Duke eyed the door doubtfully. He did not like interruptions. The fluttering knock was repeated. He started to rise, but being in a comfortable position he sank back, saying—

"Come in."

The door opened quickly and there entered with a short breathless run a young woman with a straw-colored curl across her shoulder, a hat covered with flowers and wax fruit, loose ribbon-ends hanging to her.

Duke gave one astonished look and got to his feet, waiting politely to see what would happen. But in that one look he saw that her nose was up-turned as if it had been accidentally bumped before it hardened; her eyes were a faded blue, almost colorless; her complexion was too red and too white, neither being natural; her hands were puffy and short, her feet over-sized, and her ankles bulged at the shoe-tops. Moreover she had a cuddling, kittenish manner.

"Is Mr. Coy here? Oo I must see Mr. Harry Coy. He told me that he lived here and that this was the room. I am his lady friend, and it's important. *He may be killed!*"

She almost screeched this dramatic information. Her look of expectancy was somewhat baffled by Duke's inexcitability.

He was thinking: So this is the beautiful lady? This is Harry's vision of loveliness!

And Mazie Blazie, experienced in her appraisal of men, eyed Duke from head to feet and back again; and she was thinking almost ecstatically:

"What a good-looking guy! He's a dream!"

Duke was rather tall, square-shouldered, straight even when faintly wobbly from the weight of wine; his features were sharply molded; and at all times there was an unmistakable refinement in his manner. He was an odd fellow to be a forecastle hand; and so far as any one ever knew, he was a gentleman, no matter what he might do to hide the fact. But he did not like women. 'Arry explained this with: "Some woman Hi bet married the hother feller. That's the way they treat yer. And it broke 'im hup."

Miss Blazie made another attempt to explain her coming, and its importance:

"I come here to warn Mr. Coy. His life is in danger. Butch Walrous means to kill him! He is a terrible man. Everybody is afraid of him. He used to work in a meat market before he got to be a prize fighter. An' he's crazy about *me!*"

"Mr. Coy isn't in. Any word?" asked Duke with a butler's gravity, but a strong inward feeling of uneasiness due to the closeness of Miss Blazie.

"Any word? Ain't I just told you Butch is after him? That's why I come. He's a good little sport, Harry is. I ain't stuck on him or nothing, you understand, but—but you understand."

"Yes, ma'am, I un'erstand," said Duke, bowing humbly.

"Oo you been having a party!" said Mazie Blazie, with her best kittenish grace, looking at the empty bottles, giving a longer look at the filled chilled ones. "Oo I could just *die* drinking champagne."

"Many people have felt that way, ma'am—and some have su-succeeded."

"Oo I'd like to stay. I'd like awful to stay, but I *must* be going."

She made a slight experimental movement toward the door, but as nothing was said to stop her, she stopped of her own accord and gazing at Duke, with her most kittenish grace, demanded—

"Ain't you goin' offer me a drink before I go?"

"Oh surely. Pardon me. I am very forgetful."

"Oo are you that way too? Oo so am I. It's the funniest thing the way I forget——"

As she talked she sat down, put her feet on the bottom ledge of the stand, leaned back, found her hat in the way, then removed the hat, giving it a careless fling toward a distant couch.

"You used to be a bartender, didn't you?" she demanded with a sort of triumphant eagerness. "Oo I can tell 'em. They got swell manners, barkeeps has. That's why I'm off Butch—he picks his teeth with a fork. An' I tell you, that's hard on a lady right out in public!"

"Yes, yes," Duke agreed readily. "It must be. Yes."

Miss Blazie said that she didn't think that a lady should ever drink *too* much, and Duke in an absent sort of way agreed with her. He regarded her very closely but his thoughts seemed distant.

At the bottom of the second bottle Miss Blazie waved her tumbler on high and cried happily:

"Let's have anozzer un, dearie ol' kid. I ditched Butch tonight—I come a-fin' Harry an' I fin' you, ol' kid. Zat's better—whoops-ee! My, I'm feelin' zo—zo good. Ain't you?"

Miss Blazie was slightly hilarious, but not bad-mannered. She sat comparatively quiet. Her voice was a bit unrestrained, but she kept her feet on the floor.

And Duke, as he looked at her, had a blank sort of stare in his eyes, for he was thinking:

"With a turned-up nose and pop-over ankles, faded eyes and bleached hair, she is Harry's idea of feminine loveliness. And perhaps that woman that I can't forget looks just as absurd to some other man. No doubt of it. I've been a fool, I have. Yes."

He laughed a little unsteadily.

"Wot's z'matter with you?" demanded Miss Blazie perkily. "Zomethin' ticklin' you? Huh?"

"I was just thinking of a friend. She looks something like you, something. Odd that you should come when I was thinking of her."

"I come 'o get away from thash Butsh. He borrows money off you. Twists your arm up b'hind your back till you loan it to him. Never pays it back. Never pash anything back. I hate 'im. I'll get even wish him. He's after little Harry. Thash why I come. He's stuck on me, an' he's zealous. Oo terr'ble zealous."

She whispered with great intensity—

"He'd kill ush both—kill ush both!"

And just as if cued by rehearsal, the Battling Butcher entered without knocking. His eyes were bloodshot, his jaw was undershot, and he was in that belligerent frame of mind known as half-shot.

He swaggered in with arms half-curved and swinging stiffly across his body. His fists were knotted. On his right hand he was accompanied by a friend; on his left hand by another friend. These came less as assistants than as witnesses, for Butch had sworn to eat the shrimp alive.

Miss Blazie screamed; but she was too curious to be greatly frightened, though she knew that Butch would probably beat her up—which, among Miss Blazie's caste and type was one way of showing a woman that you loved her.

It wasn't for the beatings that she got that she hated Butch. It was because he beat up other girls, thus disclosing that his affections were as scattered as a Turk's; and because by a sort of *jiujitsu* torture he borrowed money. Then, also, he *did* pick his teeth with a fork in public, which was sufficient to cause a lady to wish her escort's block knocked off.

"E-huh!" said Butch; or rather he grunted with a kind of angry doubtfulness as he eyed Duke, who at a glance was seen to be a different sort of person than the shrimp.

"Good evening," said Duke. "What can I do for you—and your friends?"

This last was accompanied by a glance toward the door where two fellows who had come with Butch were standing.

"Aw, can it!" Butch snarled. "What you mean, here with me girl! Who are *you*, you big cheese? An' a reg'lar party!"

He seemed to have pretty much of an offended air at not having been invited as he eyed the empty and iced bottles.

"Oh Butch!" pleaded Miss Blazie.

"You'll get yours. You'll get yours!" he growled in much the same way that a big dog works itself into a biting mood. "You'll get yours *now!*" he snarled again, and swept a fist at her.

Miss Blazie ducked, not a half-second too soon. She had known what to expect, and she ducked with such energy to save herself that she fell out of the chair.

This tumbling appeared very much as though she had been struck and knocked to the floor. But Butch knew her tricks. He knew that she would play 'possum at the slightest bump; and this time he wasn't to be put off or fooled. He was intent on finishing her punishment. She needed a lesson. One she wouldn't forget. She had been giving him too much trouble, and she had it coming according to all the standards of manhood known to Butch and his class. And he meant to give it to her, good.

He swung back his foot to plant it among her ribs, but he was stopped by a wallop on the nose. It was a wallop that jarred Butch clear to his hip-bones, and started his nose to trickling like a leaky spigot in a barrel of claret.

Duke knew boxing as a fine art, and he had a straight-arm punch like the jolt of a live wire. He wasn't entirely sober, but Butch was half-drunk. Butch was a heavyweight, and caught off his balance, with one foot in the air, he went down with a backward crash that dazed his two friends who had come along to see him eat the shrimp alive. They had never seen Butch tipped over before, and not being brave enough to help and being too curious to run, they edged a little closer to the door and looked on.

Butch arose, swearing and glaring. He crouched and lunged, throwing a hay-maker over his shoulder at Duke that would have put a hole in the side of a brick building. Duke stepped aside, ducking slightly. Both men were carrying booze, so the handicap was equal.

"Kill him! Kill him!" shouted Miss Blazie, jumping up and down with her hands in the air.

"Eat him, Butch! Eat 'im!" encouraged the cautious friends from the doorway.

Duke with a quick movement overturned the table, at the same time spinning it out of the way to give a larger clear space. Duke used foot-work and fought at long range. Rough and tumble went against his grain as being too messy. A clinch with Butch would have been about like embracing a gorilla.

Butch made a sweep as though swinging a scythe, and got another jab on his bleeding nose.

"Kill him!" yelled Miss Blazie.

"Get him, Butch!" chirruped the friends.

"Stand up an' fight, you ——" Butch snarled.

He had almost thrown out his arm, beating the air no nearer than an inch or two of Duke's head.

Duke put his elbow down to meet an uppercut, stepped in closer and drove his fist into the pit of Butch's stomach; and Butch, doubling over as though he had swallowed a green apple, curled up with grunts and groans on the floor.

"Get them too! Get 'em too!" yelled Miss Blazie, being as the poet has said, "more deadly than the male," as she pointed at the two spectators near the door.

These fellows, having more imagination than was good for their courage, seemed to feel that if this guy could lay Butch out twice in two minutes, he would make their lives miserable if they tried to interfere. They weren't the sort that ever had any wish to mix it unless the odds were on their side and in a dark alley. They edged back toward the door they had left open behind them, and they were ready to turn tail and hop, though they paused and hopefully eyed their fallen leader who was now grunting and struggling with fumbling vagueness to find his feet.

"Oo you saved my life—you saved my life!" cried Miss Blazie, coming at Duke with arms extended.

He stepped to one side, trying to assure her that it was all right, all, all right.

"But Ish got to repay you!" she wailed, as Duke retreated behind the over-turned table and could not be reached. However, she tried.

This was worse than having Butch after him. He started for the door.

Butch's two companions, seeing him come, undertook to leave first and made a bolt; but a heavy hoarse voice said: "No you don't!" and three rough, tough, husky men barred the way.

As Duke paused in surprize, Miss Blazie got him. She swamped him with her arms and reached for him with her lips.

"He saved my life—he saved my life!" Miss Blazie proclaimed loudly, proudly, holding on tightly while Duke jerked and twisted. He began to understand why it was that some women got beaten up.

The mate and boatswain and foremast hand of the *Valentine* did not hesitate. Their instructions had been to get three fellows and get them right. They grabbed and walloped the two companions of Butch; and Butch himself, getting up unsteadily, fierce-eyed and savage, made no more than a hostile growl before he went down again under the knuckle duster of the *Valentine* mate.

"What's the matter? Who are you?" asked Duke.

The mate gave Duke a hard look up and down. There was nothing about Duke that suggested the windjammer. He didn't look like a seaman.

"We're from the *Valentine*," said the mate hoarsely. "These are runaway sailors. We're after 'em. All three of 'em. We got 'em."

"An' they would have killed me but for thish gen'l'man," cried Miss Blazie, waving both her grateful arms toward Duke.

"Put her there," said the mate, thrusting out a heavy congratulatory hand. "I always shake the hand of a gentleman what defends ladies."

"Me too," said Bill the Boatswain, cracking the neck of a champagne bottle.

Butch's companions started a protest that they weren't sailors.

"Pipe down!" growled the mate, thumping the nearest head.

"You will be one inside a week," said the foremast hand, sourly.

"This fellow blew all his pay for champagne, I hear," said the mate, poking a toe at the fallen Butch.

"Who told you?" asked Duke, with polite interest.

"Joe Lane. He put us on to these stiffs. How's *you* come to be mixed up here with these bums?" demanded the mate.

Miss Blazie answered:

"He heard me scream—they was killing me—he heard me yell, an' comes in—knocked over that big guy——"

Butch's companions raised a stormy wail at such flagrant untruthfulness. Their protests were mixed with threats.

"Kill a woman, would yer!" said Bill the Boatswain, and he knocked their heads together.

"You'll be sailors a'right," said the gloomy hand. "He makes sailors out o' sawdust, he does."

The Battling Butcher sat up, rubbed his head, wiped his nose with the back of his hand, and gazed with deep meditation for a moment at the blood; then he looked up with a baffled wondering light in his dull eyes.

"Hi Butch, they got us wrong," yelled one of his companions. "They say we're sailors, runaway sailors——"

"Here, what's this?" said Butch, starting to get up.

He wasn't friendly, but he was partly tamed.

"Stay down!" said the boatswain, lifting an empty bottle.

He had a black-jack in his pocket.

"I'm no sailor," said Butch.

"Don't worry," said the hand with gloomy savagery. "You will be."

"That's the guy you want!" Butch shouted, pointing at Duke. "He's a sailor. You want him an' his mates!"

"Tell us who we want, eh Bill?" said the mate cheerfully as he took one of the iced bottles and started to empty it.

"I'm the Battling Butcher—I'm a prize fighter!"

"Are you?" said the mate, looking at him with ironical interest. "Been gettin' butchered too, looks to me."

"He is the Battling Butcher!" chorused the companions.

"Pipe down!" roared the boatswain, turning on them; and they shrank into silence.

"Ask her!" demanded Butch.

"Who is he, miss?" asked the mate, putting on all the politeness that he had, at the same time slipping a couple of unopened bottles under his coat-tail.

"What you going to do with him?" asked Miss Blazie, cautiously.

"Take him on board our ship. She sails at sun-up."

"For Australia," said the gloomy hand.

To Miss Blazie, Australia seemed as far off as the moon.

"He's the man you want—you sure do," she said.

"Ow, —— you!" cried Butch, crouching

for a rush that would punish the faithless woman. "I'll fix you!"

"Save me!" screamed Miss Blazie, reaching for Duke, who backed away.

The mate and boatswain fell on Butch as at a signal and laid him low.

"That's what you'll get next," said the gloomy hand to Butch's friends.

"Let's be off," said the mate, stowing another bottle of champagne.

"How are we going to take three when it will take two to bear him along?" asked the boatswain, pointing at Butch.

"Be easy," said the gloomy hand, with a menacing scowl toward Butch's companions. "I'll attend to these stiffs. Hear me, you!"

They heard, and looked uneasy.

"All right then. Let's shove off," said the mate.

Butch resisted with sullen stubbornness, but the mate and boatswain knew all about handling men in all stages of stubbornness and drunkenness. So Butch went along, promising all manner of revenge on many people, on his companions, whom he accused of having played him false by not putting up a fight, on the sailors who had walloped him severely, on Miss Blazie who had betrayed when she might have saved him. It was a rough tough old world for the Battling Butcher that night.

Before the sound of their feet had died away on the stairs, Duke began wondering what to do with Miss Blazie. He liked her as little as before, though now she had some claim on his gratitude. The excitement had somewhat lessened the effervescence of the bubbles that she had swallowed, but her presence was disagreeable to Duke, though he was in a far more pleasant humor than when she had arrived.

"I say, Miss Blazie. You just be seated a minute. I think I know where I can find Harry. I'll go look for him and——"

"No, we don't want him now. He's safe. Butch is on his way to Australia—I hope a kangeroo eats him!"

"But Harry will feel dreadful at missing you."

"Him? That little pickle! Me? You're kiddin' me. He ain't nothing to me. I should say not! I just done him a favor by coming here. That's all."

"But I thought you were close friends, you two?"

"Not me. Nay, nay. He ain't got the looks to appeal to *me*," said Miss Blazie, with a languishing stare at the tall handsome Duke.

"But Harry said——"

"He don't mean a thing in my young life. Why, I just treated him like a kid brother, y'know. That's all. Well, if them fellows didn't clean up all *our* bottles!" said Miss Blazie, peering thirstily at the wash-tub. "Stuck some in their pockets. I saw 'em. But of course I couldn't say thing for fear they might get peevish and turn Butch loose. Hope it chokes 'em, I do! What are *we* going a-do now?"

She looked up at him with kittenish enticement, but he was preoccupied with a cigaret he was rolling; and he continued to be preoccupied as long as she looked at him in just that way.

Then she sat down with a slightly petulant flop, and pretended to turn her back on him.

Duke lighted his cigaret and looked at the ceiling; then 'Arry came in with a jump, his tongue rattling as he came, and the eye that he could see with glistened merrily.

"Hi, Duke! Webster's made a killin', 'e has, wiv a lottery! See!"

He held out some disks of gold.

" 'E give this to me. Hi come to tell you. 'E's staying at Wu Lon's, buckin' the beans. Come on, Duke. Cheer-io! Let's celebrate!"

"Harry, my boy. Harry," said Duke, placing a hand on 'Arry's shoulder and giving a side glance at Miss Blazie, whose chair happened to be on 'Arry's blind side, "you are a fortunate youth. You have inspired affection in the heart of one woman, who at great personal risk and with daring, came here to give you warning of danger and console you for injuries——"

'Arry looked pretty blank. He was a little afraid of Duke's grand manner, largely because he had a vague feeling that Duke used it only in an ironical sense. He felt more at home when speech was unceremonious and Duke called him names that would have been fighting words on another person's lips.

"Yes, Harry, my son, she is the paragon of pulchritude, the same beautiful damozel that got you pitched head-first out of the restaurant and——"

'Arry at that moment caught sight of Miss Blazie, and all the charm to which he had succumbed earlier in the evening again asserted itself, and he rushed to her.

"Oh Harry!" she cried, touchingly, with arms out. "You poor boy!"

Whether her pity was inspired by the sight of his battered features, or whether she was revenging herself on the coldness of Duke by the warmth of her reception of 'Arry, or whether the tinkle of gold disks had exerted the magic influence, to which some women even above the dance-hall status are susceptible, is not possible to say.

Duke, having a poor opinion of the sex, put it down to the money.

"Poor!" shouted 'Arry, jingling his coins. "Hi'm a rich boy! We'll celebrate, we will!"

A minute later they were gone, with Miss Blazie having carefully avoided meeting Duke's amused eyes.

Duke, now rolling another cigaret, laughed. The black mood was gone. It seemed, for the present, deep folly to have ever been depressed. He hummed to himself as he stirred about, getting ready to go out. He would go to Wu Lon's and help Webster win a million dollars at fan-tan. And the words of the tune that he hummed were:

Wine ne'er deceives a man,
For it is wine's red rule
That if a man does drink of it
He will be made a fool.

The dancing dice are honest,
For any fool should know
That if he plays with spotted bones
They'll lay his fortune low.

But woman's lovely face
Is such a deep disguise
That any man would rather be
Her fool than safely wise!

"Yes," muttered Duke to himself, "I'm cured. Cured. Miss Mazie Blazie did it, and 'Arry. Since it is the natural province and inevitable destiny of man to be a fool wherever women are concerned, why should I have these spells of bitterness because a false woman really did me the favor to throw herself to another man? I shouldn't—I'm cured."

V

JOE LANE was leaning against the bar, describing his recent experiences in being shanghaied, and adding such frills as gave him a suitable appearance in the matter, when the second mate of the *Valentine* came from the rear of the saloon and roughly poked Lane in the side by way of attracting attention.

"We got 'em," said the mate.

"Ah, good for you!" exclaimed Lane, his face lighting up. He started for the back room.

The mate caught his arm.

"Just a minute. We get that money, don't we?"

"Yes, yes. Surely you get the money. Never paid money so gladly in my life as——"

"All right," said the mate. "Go along then an' take your wallop apiece at 'em."

Lane hurried, and the mate stumped along with awkward haste after him.

Lane opened the door. He searched in a glance the faces there; then:

"Where are they?"

"Hey Joe," Butch shouted with the eagerness of one in trouble who recognizes a friend. "Get us out o' this. Ask Joe there, you fellows. He knows me."

"He oughta," said the mate. "He's payin' us fifty dollars apiece to get you. An' come through with that money, *now!*"

"But these ain't the men!" Joe Lane shouted, raising a hand in protest.

"I knowed you'd try to slip out. I knowed it," said the mate ominously, drawing in his neck, humping his shoulders, lifting his arms a little as if getting ready to do a certain sort of job. "Do we get that money?"

"But—" began Joe Lane, who was not blessed with an abundance of personal courage.

"I'll clean *you!*" Butch yelled at Lane. "You—why—you—" he called Joe Lane all the names known to a fellow who had been born south of the slot and raised on the coast. "I'll bring my gang and clean your dump. You put these guys on to me——"

"Listen, Butch. Listen——"

"Listen nothin'! I'll get you, and get you right!"

"We got no time to listen to arguments," said the gloomy hand.

"You can't never square yourself with me, Joe Lane," Butch yelled. "I'll run you into the bay. I'll pass the word, an' what's done to you'll make you wish you'd never heard of Butch Walrous—you blankety—blankety—blank!"

And Joe Lane knew that it was so. He was in Dutch with the Battling Butcher, and the Battling Butcher could and would make his life miserable, perhaps worthless.

It did no good for Joe to try to blame the *Valentine* sailors. They were inclined to be bilious, and wouldn't admit of any blame. They were suspicious of Joe Lane's motives in blaming them—thought he was trying to get out of paying the one hundred and fifty dollars; and they were ready to fight.

"We done what you told us to do," said the mate. "We found what you said we would find. And we come back here with the stiffs as you asked us to. An' do we get the money?"

Joe Lane saw the glint of knuckle-dusters on the mate's fist.

"You give them money an' I'll kill you!" yelled Butch.

"We'll kill you!" squawked Butch's companions.

"Pipe down!" said the sour-faced hand, and he bumped their heads together.

"Do we get that money?" demanded the mate with slow and sinister enunciation.

Joe Lane reached for his pocket-book; and as he did so he looked toward Butch and tried to wink, but the wink wouldn't come—merely an unintelligible grimace.

"I'll kill you, Joe Lane!" Butch bellowed, getting an arm up for a swing.

The mate stood on the other side of Lane, also ready to swing.

"You pay them, an' I'll beat you to death!" Butch shouted, his face working in fury.

"You don't pay an' I'll turn him loose on you," said the boatswain, who had a grip on Butch's collar with one hand and on a black-jack with the other.

"Listen, Butch, I'll pay, but there's been a mistake. I'll explain——"

"You'll get yours!" Butch roared and made a lunge, but the boatswain jerked him back and gave him a blow on the top of the head with the shot-loaded leather.

It wasn't a knock-out wallop; just enough of a jolt to tame Butch down.

Lane counted out the money, and the mate recounted it laboriously. He had no faith in Joe Lane.

Then said the mate, when sure that the pay conformed with the promise: "Well, if these ain't the stiffs, I guess we'd better turn 'em loose. We need sailors, but——"

"Turn us loose!" chorused Butch's companions.

Butch himself was sitting in wobbly sullenness, his eyes steadily on Joe Lane's face. The other two also eyed Lane with baleful glances that hinted at gas-pipes in dark alleys, shots through the doorway, or at least bricks heaved into the bar mirror.

Then Joe Lane put on a manner of hopefulness as he looked at Butch, and said cheerfully:

"Let's have a drink all round. How about it, Butch old scout? Can we make it up?"

Butch started to answer with a curse, hesitated, then:

"Sure. I see how it was. I was sore. But if you say it was a mistake, sure I'll call it off."

"Sure," said Butch's companions. "We'll call it off."

"Then a drink all round," said Joe Lane, with an air of good cheer. "Wait just a minute. I'll get it."

He went out.

"I don't blame you guys," said Butch, with a confidential huskiness, looking from the mate to the boatswain, "but *him*—I'll get *him*. Thinks he can call me off with a drink! He's got no more sense than an idiot! I'll even up on him."

"We'll even up!" said the other two, and the sour hand eyed them as if he wished again to crack their heads for having broken the silence imposed.

Lane came with glasses full of whisky. He placed the glasses before each man, and lifting his own, said—

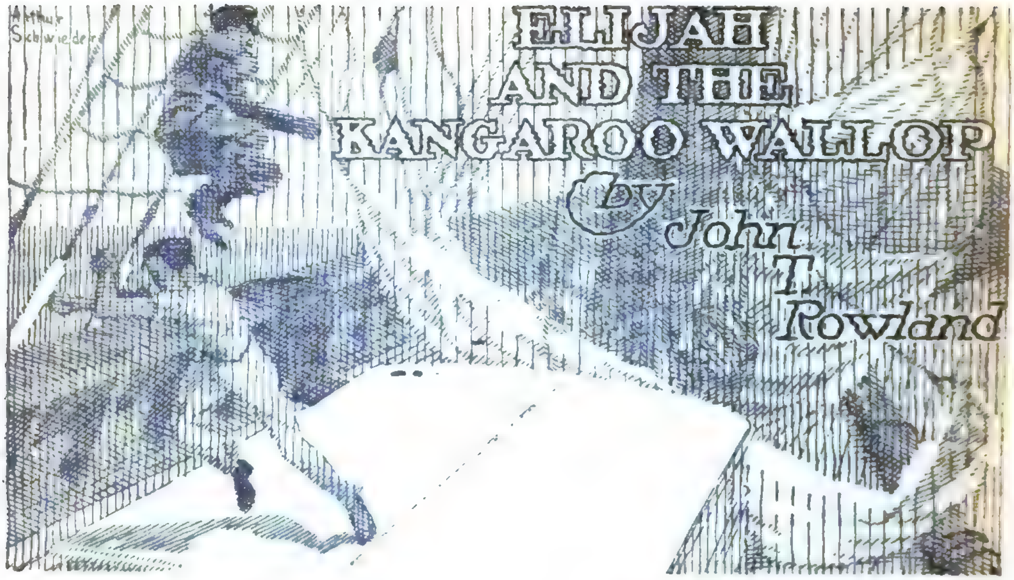
"Here's luck all round!"

"Luck!" voices answered, and the whisky was thrown down their throats.

"Friends now—eh, Joe?" Butch grinned and put out his hand, then his body seemed to sag; he made an effort to shake himself, but a moment later crumpled and fell forward.

The other two men also slept.

"Get him on board your ship," said Joe Lane. "You need sailors an' I wouldn't trust 'em. They meant to get me. That's why I shook a little K. O. in their booze. Nobody'll know what's happened or how they went. And I don't want ever to see 'em again! But that Duke and them guys—I'll even up yet, some day, I will!"



ELIJAH AND THE KANGAROO WALLOP

By John T. Rowland

Author of "The Gun-Runner" and "When Fate Grinned."

FROM his broad quarter-deck Captain Elijah Welles studied the beach with silent disapproval. Tall and spare, a little gray over the temples and with a chronic stoop from years of ducking under spanker-booms and companion-hatches, the *Laska's* master had upon him the ineffable stamp of that passing race—the old New England sailor.

Welleses had sailed out of New London and Mystic for seven generations and had commanded everything from a Stonington sloop to a skysail-yard clipper, but no one of them would ever set foot in steam. So in this dark age for wind-driven shipping the last of the tribe was driven to seek employment under a foreign flag, and the Nova Scotian firm of Pease & Wright had been glad to avail itself of his services.

Elijah Welles continued to stare with wrinkled brow. What he saw was a strip of sandy beach confined between low, jutting points of coral formation. Back from the beach stretched a small islet—or *cay* in the Bahamian parlance—which was presided over by three sentinel palms of immense height whose fronds rattled dolefully in the brisk trade wind. And well indeed they might, for their realm of blue sea and still bluer lagoon had been suddenly and rudely invaded.

At their feet and for some distance along the center of the isle stretched a straggling line of rough shacks and slovenly tents, from the largest of which—an affair not unlike a small circus tent—proceeded the tin-pan clatter of an abused piano ridding its soul of the latest Broadway jazz. A fiddle squawked, and voices ranging from soprano to bass took up the syncopated cadence in a very cloudburst of noise.

Such was Two Gun Cay, as viewed from the harbor. An unconsidered bit of coral rock, indicated merely by a little crescent-shaped mark on the admiralty chart of the Bahamas, it had sprung almost overnight into prominence as the second largest rum-loading depot of the islands.

Here swift black schooners ran in of an evening to take on a cargo of contraband for the parched shores of Long Island and New Jersey after having cleared from Nassau for a Nova Scotia port. The culture of the isle was somewhat like that of Dawson City in its palmy days, only worse; for here was no hardship or toil to steel men's souls. Tropic sky and tropic sea, gold and liquor in abundance—these things had attracted a crew that would have outshone in their own peculiar way the crude buccaneers who made this same *cay* their carousal place in an earlier and a simpler day.

"That must be our stuff, back o' the

staging," remarked the *Laska's* mate, indicating a great pile of wooden cases which had been heaped up on the shore behind an improvised pier. "Should be easy to load, anyhow."

Captain Welles grunted. Then he turned to the mate.

"When you've finished furling sail get a boat alongside and I'll go ashore for orders. Put young Albert in the boat; I won't trust any one else to set foot in this hell's kitchen!"

He remained a long time standing, gazing shorewards and crumpling in his fist the cable message from his owners which had come while he was discharging cargo in a Cuban port. This had directed him to proceed with his vessel to the present unfrequented spot among the Bahama *cays* and there report for further orders to an individual whose name as well as his business had been strange to the worthy merchant captain.

"I didn't figure I was a-gettin' into this sort of trade," Elijah Welles muttered when at last he climbed down into his boat.

The young mate made a grimace behind his back and exchanged winks with the ship's cook.

"IT'S dead easy, cap. All we want you for is a freighter, see? It saves our own vessel the time she'd lose coming back after another load."

The speaker was a short, stocky man with a rapid voice and eyes that roved constantly as he talked.

"My schooner will meet you well offshore—I'll give you the position before you sail—and take the cargo from you at sea. Then she goes in and sells her stuff to shore boats just outside the twelve-mile limit; but that's got nothin' to do with you. As soon as the cargo is turned over you're free to go your road."

Captain Welles sat puffing a twisted cheroot; his face a stolid mask.

"Sounds right easy," said he at length, "but look here: how come I can turn the stuff over to any one on the high seas when I'm cleared for a Nova Scotia port?"

"Oh, we'll fix that," the agent laughed. "You'll be held up and robbed on the high seas. Alec knows his job. He'll stage it like a movie and put over an act of piracy that you can write up in your log and swear to before the Supreme Court, if you have to. Here, cap; try a touch of this fine old Bourbon."

Welles made a curt gesture of dissent and continued to gaze stonily into space. They made an odd pair seated at the plain board table in the muggy heat under the tent. Across the hall the tortured piano commenced again to rattle and before the perspiring agent had time to repeat his invitation the place was drowned under the din of a wild swarm of dancers who swept out on the floor to the accompaniment of overturned chairs and smashing glasses.

"Hit'er up, Billy; giv'r the gas!" yelled a hairy gorilla with shirt open at the throat as he shoved his way roughly through the throng and led a comely young woman to the dancing-space.

"Who's that?" Elijah Welles asked as much by gesture as by voice.

The booze agent leaned across the table and shouted to make himself heard.

"That's 'Whisky Alec'—one o' my skippers. Sailing tonight with 4,000 cases for N' York."

As Welles watched the big fellow's gyrations with a sort of amused disgust the other studied his face narrowly.

"He's the lad you're to turn your cargo over to," he added.

Elijah Welles' jaw set like a steel trap and he leaned back in his chair. But the look on his face was one of torment rather than of resolution. All his life he had been brought up in the school that a shipmaster's first duty is to his owners, but never before had any owner he had sailed for put him in such a position. The schooner *Laska's* master half-closed his eyes and frowned.

A crash interrupted his thoughts, followed next instant by a scream. The music, if such it might be called, ceased abruptly and out of the crowd at the far end of the hall burst a lithe figure in a torn gown of flimsy black material. A poinciana blossom hung drunkenly from the girl's disheveled hair.

Looking past her head as she sped in his direction, which was likewise that of the door, Elijah Welles saw a struggling group clustered about the herculean dancer. Then he heard a roar and the sound of blows, and next instant the hairy giant had flung them all aside and was coming in pursuit.

"Come back here!" he bellowed, knocking chairs and tables right and left in his rush.

The girl swept past Elijah's table and out into the night.

"Some poor boob tried to cut in on Alec and he knocked him for a gool," the agent glibly explained; but to Welles' mind, unaccustomed as he was to such surroundings, the affair seemed to bear a deeper significance.

As the bootleg skipper approached, Elijah rose to meet him. The other, not understanding, attempted to swerve; but his speed was too great. Like a battering ram Elijah's great fist shot out; there came a resounding smash and the sickening crunch of bone, and the big bootlegger sprawled backwards and measured his length on the floor.

In the silence which followed a woman's voice cried—

"My ——, he's killed him!"

The lights went out, leaving the place inky black, and in the confusion Captain Welles found himself being pushed and jostled out of doors. Once under the clear tropic stars he shook himself and drew a deep breath to drive the smell of too pungent scent from his nostrils. Then he discovered his late table companion still by his side.

They walked in silence towards the shore. Well out in the bay the *Laska's* three tall masts showed dimly against the sky and her anchor light glowed steadily like a low hung star.

"You shouldn't a' done that," said the agent after a while. "Alec will sure have it in for you now—if he ain't dead."

The man's voice had lost something of its oily assurance.

Captain Welles made no reply.

At the end of the pier they found the *Laska's* boat made fast with the boy Albert asleep in the stern-sheets. Welles woke him up and told him to come alongside the ladder. While they stood waiting in the deep darkness a heavy tramping sounded from the shoreward end of the pier and soon a group of men appeared staggering under the weight of one who tossed his arms and groaned.

The agent shoved Captain Welles out of their path into the deeper gloom.

"Hurt much?" he inquired in a hushed voice as they came up.

Two men sprang down into a dory to receive the bulky figure of their skipper.

"We're takin' him out aboard," said one. "Be gettin' under weigh right off to keep him from murderin' that jay—naw, he ain't hurted none; just dazed him a bit. But say, he'll sure get square with that long-legged son of a parson when we come to 'capture' his vessel!"

And they rowed off into the night.

As he took a turn upon the quarter-deck before turning in that night Elijah Welles pondered on a problem that had never before arisen in all his years at sea—two of them in fact. Was it wrong to engage in a trade which while not perhaps illegal in itself yet served to abet one that was; and how far—short of the actual commission of crime—did a shipmaster's loyalty bind him to perform his owners' bidding?

His unbending conscience, hard as the granite of his native state, gave him a quick answer to the first, but that only served to make the second so much the more difficult of solution. The training of a lifetime is not a thing to be set aside easily.

IT WAS four days before the *Laska* had her cargo under hatches and was ready to put to sea. Ashore, in the place which he contemptuously termed "the pigsty," the gaunt Yankee had been treated with marked respect. Fear it was partly, yet there was something about it that did not quite ring true. Elijah had a sense of laughter going on behind his back and of faces suddenly pulled serious when he whirled about.

Still, the loading had gone well and swiftly and the smirking agent had been courtesy itself. One thing which greatly troubled him was the lack of written instructions, and with no cable station nearer than Nassau there was no way in which he could communicate with his owners direct.

"Aw, that ain't nothin' to worry about," said the mate. "You've got their cable, ain't you?—the one you got at Maguay. You can't expect 'em to give a man written orders in *this* trade!"

This was a familiarity Captain Welles would not have taken ordinarily from a subordinate, but in the present case any word of support was comforting.

"I reckon you're right, mister," he said for the hundredth time. "It's the owners' lookout after all, not mine. Well, then, heave short on your chain and as soon as the wind favors we'll ease out o' this hole of ——!"

When the wide Atlantic had received him once more upon her bosom Old Man Welles felt better. A few days now with a fair wind and the job would be done. Then he would bear away for Halifax, whither ostensibly he was bound, and report that he had been held up and robbed on the high seas while proceeding upon his lawful occasions. As to what might occur while the actual deed of piracy was being performed Captain Welles gave himself little concern.

This aspect of the case, however, began soon to give rise to a certain uneasiness among his crew.

"If only the Old Man hadn't bopped that bird it 'ud be right enough," as the cook said to the donkey-engine man when the latter dropped in for a mug-up during the second dog watch; "but now there's no tellin' what they'll do to us. Pirates, yah! I'm tellin' you them hard-boiled sons of mackerel-killers will make old Blackbeard hisself ashamed if they ever once rightly cut loose. It's the —— chain-locker fer this baby once I hears 'em comin' over the side!"

This opinion, it may be added, was shared to a greater or less extent by everybody except the youthful mate, who was at some pains to point out that for business reasons if nothing else it would be unwise for the bootleggers to do more than stage a realistic act.

"It'll be real, all right," muttered the cook. "The Old Man won't have to perjure himself!"

And since the cook is really the person next in importance to the skipper on a vessel of the *Laska's* type his words passed unchallenged.

If Captain Welles was aware of the fear that came gradually to fasten upon his crew he gave no sign. Nevertheless, as the vessel cruised lazily northward in the center of the stream the Old Man grew daily more morose and the lines cut more deeply into his lean, weathered face. His trouble, however, was of the soul, and he cared not who saw it. Finally, when the schooner was in about the latitude of Cape Henry, he burst out to the mate as the two stood together on the quiet deck before the change of the watch at midnight.

"A scurvy trick, mister!" he exclaimed so suddenly that the helmsman started. "A downright —— scurvy trick, no less! It would serve the owners right if I stood on and carried my cargo to Halifax."

"It would be your finish with *them*."

"Of course—and ships are scarce these days. My kids—" The Old Man checked himself abruptly and with a muttered "Good night and a good watch to you," went below.

But when the mate half an hour later ducked below for his night-glass he fetched up with a start at the sight of Elijah Welles in an attitude of prayer in his own cabin. The mate stole back on deck with secret elation in his heart.

"The Old Man's going to crack," he kept telling himself throughout the silent watch. "He'll blow up higher than a kite; then won't I make myself solid with the owners—oh boy!"

He hugged himself with glee.

A few days of head wind and sour weather kept all hands busy and gave a respite from their brooding. Elijah Welles, to ease his mind apparently, cracked on sail and drove his complaining vessel through the water like a yacht.

"He's tryin' to see how fast she c'n go, in case he wants to give Whisky Alec the slip." the mate confided to the cook after the galley had been flooded by a boarding sea.

"What's the —— use o' that?" retorted the blaspheming "doctor," sloshing through knee-deep water to retrieve his pots and pans. "No coasting vessel has ever been built that could run away from a Lunenburg banker. As fer me, I wish he'd keep clear of her altogether: it's the only thing will save us all a hiding!"

Captain Welles worked up his next noon position with meticulous care. Towards three o'clock the weather broke away. Patches of clear sky showed here and there and the wind, going round with the sun into the southwest, swept the low scud off to leeward. The welcome sun broke through and flashed from the *Laska's* gleaming decks. Men flung off their oil clothes and reveled in its cheer. Then, just when a feeling of good will seemed on the verge of being restored, the pole masts of a swift schooner poked out of the low cloud bank ahead and a few moments later the vessel herself came into view, standing across the *Laska's* bows.

For a minute or two the stranger hung in the wind as though to look the larger vessel over; and then a string of signal flags fluttered aloft and stood out stiff as boards from her truck.

"That's him," cried the mate. "There goes his recognition signal!"

Captain Welles raised his long-glass and grunted.

"M—N—; that means 'heave to immediately,'" he drawled as a second flag-hoist climbed aloft. "Starboard a bit," he ordered the helmsman. "Steer so's to pass close under her stern."

With a spanking breeze over her quarter the three-masted *Laska* made short work of the intervening distance. All her crew clustered at the fore rigging to study the stranger. She was a fine, modern fisherman, two masted, with a long main boom and a tremendous spread of sail. She carried the usual dories nested in the waist, and except for her position so far from any fishing-grounds, would have passed without question for a Gloucesterman or Lunenburger on her way to the Banks. Besides the man at her wheel there were only two people visible on her deck, one of whom, standing well aft on the quarter-deck, was a man of immense frame with something white bound round his head.

Captain Welles studied this man carefully and then lowered his glass with a grim smile.

"Bandage, eh? Well, I didn't kill him, anyhow—more's the pity," he told the mate.

The *Laska* charged ahead. When only a single long swell intervened the cook tugged the man next him by the sleeve.

"Look there!" he exclaimed. "They've got her name covered up."

It was true. Over the fisherman's stern a square of canvas had been hung and secured in such a way as to hide completely her name and port of hail. The legend on her bow was similarly covered with a strip of white.

Meanwhile a small commotion broke out upon the stranger's deck. Men gesticulated; and the big fellow, who was obviously her master, signalled the *Laska* violently not to pass so close.

Beside the latter's wheel the young mate fidgeted uneasily.

"You'll run her down if you don't watch out!" he cried.

Welles turned toward him with a cold stare.

"Reckon I can con my ship without your advice," he said. Then to the man at the wheel: "Ease her up a mite more—steady! Just graze the end of his main boom."

Now they were rushing across the fisherman's stern. That vessel, being virtually hove-to, lay dead in the water. Her master stood measuring the distance with a critical eye. He cupped his hands and let out a bellow.

"Don't foul me, by ——, or I'll take it out of your blasted hides!"

The words were barely spoken when the *Laska*, staggering over the big swell which still was running, reeled drunkenly toward the smaller vessel. With a cry of alarm the mate sprang back just as the end of her main boom poked through the mizzen rigging. A crack, a splintering crash—and the big schooner swept on with part of the broken spar still tangled in her shrouds.

From the fisherman's deck a cyclone of blasphemy arose, but Elijah Welles retorted in a voice that drowned them all.

"I'm bound to Halifax," he roared. "See the owners, you blackguard, if you want damages. I've no truck with vessels that are scared to show their names!"

On both vessels a silence of dumb amazement followed his words.

Then: "Boy, oh boy, we've got to make knots now!" the *Laska's* cook exclaimed.

Captain Welles turned to his mate.

"Wing out the fore boom, Mister," he drawled. "We'll put her dead before it and let her go."

What peculiar mental quirk had led Elijah to keep his rendezvous in such a fashion when he might easily have avoided the other vessel entirely is one of those things no man may know. Perhaps, if things had gone differently, he would have fulfilled his duty to the owners as his training decreed; but now, at any rate, all thought of that was past. It was a race now—hunter and hunted.

Instantly the fishing-schooner's deck swarmed with men who worked eagerly to clear away the wreckage. And the damage, after all, was slight. Only a few feet of boom was gone; the vessel could still carry her big mainsail reefed, and while this was indeed a handicap it was not a great one. Captain Welles had seized his only chance in putting his vessel dead before the wind, for on that point of sailing there is less difference between fast vessels and slow ones than on any other.

Before he had gone a mile, however, he saw the fisherman swing off in pursuit like a fish hawk with its wings trimmed to take full advantage of the wind. Meanwhile a wonderful change had come over the man. Vanished were the lines of brooding. With his job lost and his future ruined, he walked the quarter-deck lightly as a boy. A high color had come into his checks and his voice rang out sharp and clear as he encouraged his men. He knew well that a stern chase is a long one, during which many things might happen.

As for the crew, they worked doggedly, with many a backward glance, and required little urging. The fore-topsail had been clewed up to jibe the sail over, and now they sheeted it home with a will. Elijah Welles grinned at their alacrity, so different from the usual shiftless indifference with which he had had to contend. The ocean is wide and there was no other sail in sight: times had not changed much and men's natures less since the days of piracy with its bloody fights and swift reprisals. A few lives more or less would be small matter to a man of the stamp of Whisky Alec.

"We're in Dutch, boys," Elijah sang out. "Bear a hand, now, if you want to see the beach—mister, rig that new stay-sail as a 'catch-all' under the fore boom—it may help the old girl to travel. Then we'll break out the awning and do the same for the mizzen."

In half an hour the *Laska* was fairly smothered under canvas from truck to water-line. When at last every possible shred of cloth had been hung out, "like an Irish wash-day," to quote the cook, the men were permitted to rest—and their first glance was astern.

The pursuer had not gained much—at any rate not so fast as they had feared—still, gaining she certainly was; of that there could be no doubt. So, after all, it was just a question of time. Darkness might hold out some faint hope, but that would not fall for several hours yet.

Captain Welles paced his quarter-deck humming old tunes, a trick he had when thinking deeply. Suddenly he stopped short, slapped his thigh and chuckled. The mate, watching with the tail of his eye, saw and wondered. Then a cunning gleam came into his eye and he slunk forward along the opposite side of the house. In the galley he found the cook nervously peeling spuds for supper.

"Well, Mister Mate, what's up now?" snapped the dignitary of the oven.

"More and worse, doctor," the other lugubriously replied. "If we give this Old Man scope enough he'll hang us higher than Paddy's kite, or get all our throats slit —which is worse."

"*Us* give him scope, you say! What the blazes can we do about it?"

"Quite a bit, doctor," the mate answered in a significant tone. "The question is: Are the boys game to take a hand in this game for the owners?"

The cook stared with a half-peeled potato still clenched in his fist.

"Can you put it over, mister?—square the lot of us O. K. with that murtherin' Whisky Alec?"

"Leave that to me," grinned the mate. "You talk to the boys when they come in for their grub; tell 'em what I'm goin' to tell you now. It'll mean double pay for all hands when the voyage is over, or I'll eat my sou'wester!"

BY FIVE o'clock the fast fishing-schooner had drawn so close, even hampered as she was by her reduced rig, that a good swimmer might have dived from the *Laska's* high stern and come up under the pursuer's bow. Captain Welles had caused the long-boat, which hung from his stern davits, to be loaded with a bundle of old sails tightly rolled and corded. This made an excellent breastwork, proof against the highest-powered bullet; and since one could see over the top of it only by mounting the rail he had little to fear from premature hostilities. Occasionally he climbed up to survey the enemy's deck, and at such times a double-barreled shotgun was a conspicuous part of his equipment.

The wind meanwhile had been growing softer, and this it was that had given the doughty shipmaster his inspiration. He knew it would moderate still more as the sun sank, and he knew also that it would die away close to the water some time before it did aloft. This in itself would give the *Laska* some advantage on account of her loftier masts; but he had an additional trick up his sleeve and now the time seemed ripe to play it.

"Mister," he sang out, "take the old tarpaulin from Number Two hatch and bend it on to the cargo boom by two corners. Hitch a couple of lines to the lower corners, for tacks, and send the whole works up on the staysail halyard. That'll give us a big squaresail aloft where it will do the best work. Look sharp now, and we'll show those blackguards our heels!"

The mate stared a moment dumbly, then nodded mechanically and moved away.

Old Man Welles continued his pacing. His hands were clasped behind him and he paused now and then to glance at the mastheads of the pursuer looming every minute higher above the long-boat. There was little time to spare but he had arranged it so purposely, for he did not intend that Whisky Alec should suspect his plan while the breeze still blew fresh. To draw away from him just as dusk was falling: that was the scheme. Captain Welles chuckled in anticipation of the other's helpless rage. Then he glanced down at his own main deck and frowned.

"Hallo, there, what's wrong with you!" he exclaimed. "Can't you get the hang of that rig, mister?"

The mate and crew were standing together in a little knot, deep in discussion but with idle hands.

"Look alive, dummies," the Old Man exploded, "this isn't any yacht race!"

The mate shuffled uneasily and the others drew apart.

"Here, you blockheads; I'll show you!" cried Elijah, and he sprang down off the poop into their midst.

As the skipper's exasperation increased, so likewise did their stupidity; nevertheless the odd sail at length climbed aloft and began to do its work. Immediately the *Laska* responded, drawing ahead at an appreciably faster speed.

"That's the trick!" shouted Captain Welles. "Go it, old girl, and we'll fool your owners yet. Mister——"

But he looked in vain for the mate.

Then to his astounded ears came the sound of that worthy's voice, screaming from the stern:

"—and you'll agree not to harm me and the crew; all right Whisky, she's yours!" Then to the man at the wheel: "Hard down your helm! Beat it for'ard, out o' the way."

As the Old Man sprang up the poop ladder he caught sight of the mate disappearing past the far corner of the house carrying the shotgun with him. Elijah rushed at the wheel, but already it had been rolled hard over and lashed.

Before he could cut the line which held it the vessel swerved up sharply toward the wind. Her big foresail jibed with a crash across the deck, ripping its topsail over the stays and making sad havoc of the gear. Next the main and mizzen sails began to thrash and then the new-fangled squaresail was caught fairly aback and broke the main-topmast off short at the hounds, bringing it down in a tangle of rigging upon the deck. Rounding up still further, the *Laska* plunged bows under into a trough of the heavy swell and fetched up dead, all a-shudder.

"Great Grief!" cried Captain Welles wringing his hands.

For ten seconds he stood rooted to the spot, too dumbfounded to speak or move.

Riding gracefully over the seas, the enemy vessel rounded up under his lee. Her crew set up a howl of derision and the men on the *Laska*, unmindful of their vessel's plight, retreated to the forecastle head, led by the mate.

The fishing-schooner came smartly alongside and her giant skipper, watching his chance, sprang nimbly to the *Laska's* rail, thirst for a vengeance too long deferred spurring his every move. Now the rigging of the fisherman swarmed with men eager to see the fun. Alec threw off his jacket and disclosed under the tight shirt which he wore a torso bulging with muscles.

Elijah Welles came down off the poop, cast a remorseful glance at the wreckage all about and sprang up on to the only clear space—the top of the main hatch, a space twelve feet square and elevated some three feet above the level of the deck.

Twenty feet away lay his shotgun where the mate had dropped it in craven flight, but Elijah saw it too late. Already Whisky Alec was charging with a rush, head low and knotted arms swinging. A savage grin twisted his mouth and his eyes burned like points of flame. The bandage on his head still showed marks of dried blood.

Old Man Welles gave way a pace and met the first charge with a straight-arm jab. But this was not like the encounter under the tent. Whisky Alec knew this time what was up and the tap served only to check him in his rush. There was a flash of arms and Elijah measured his length upon the hatch.

But he was up like a flash and landed a haymaker under the other's guard. Then, before the big fellow could recover, he planted a stinging right and left on the face.

Bellowing with rage, Whisky Alec rushed again. Any one of his swings would have knocked the older man cold, but somehow they landed on empty air. Elijah, still wearing his heavy sea boots, danced round the hatch with an agility that went oddly with his great height and iron gray hair. The gallery shouted advice to their champion, and the latter, breathing fury with every thwarted blow, waded in with a ferocity greater even than before.

He landed, and the blow sounded like the report of a gun. Twice he knocked Welles clear across the ring, but by a miracle the latter got to his feet in time to escape being "stomped." This was true "hell ship" fighting, with no mercy shown to the man who went down.

Welles' face was bleeding and one eye was nearly closed. He retreated now, fighting purely on the defensive.

"Clout him, Alec! Murder the parson!" came the shouts from the fisherman's rigging.

And Whisky Alec, with his face wreathed in a smile of savage joy, plunged in to do their bidding.

He sprang across the canvas-covered hatch. Welles crouched panting in its far corner: there seemed no way for him to escape. Alec lunged and threw his whole tremendous weight into a smash that might have felled a horse. Both crews held their breath. Next moment, however, they gasped as one man, unable to credit their eyes.

Like a huge jack-rabbit Captain Welles had shot straight up in the air for nearly his own height, with legs drawn up like a high jumper. Then, as the blow passed under him, he had driven both armed heels down with all his strength into the middle of his antagonist's back. The latter, diving with momentum unchecked, shot a dozen feet from the hatch and landed in a heap against the rail where he lay inert with his head and one arm doubled under his great carcass.

It had happened so quickly and so entirely without warning that nobody spoke or stirred. And this Elijah Welles must have foreseen, for he sprang on the instant to the quarter-deck and snatched up his gun.

The rum-runner had drifted in so close as almost to rub sides with the *Laska* at the bottom of each roll. With the exception of the man at her wheel the crew were all clustered in the rigging. Old Captain Welles threw up his twelve-gauge and covered them.

"Not a man moves till I tell him to," he roared out. "Now, you at the wheel, take your knife and cut away the halyards. Then unreeve 'em through the blocks and throw 'em overside. Look sharp now, or I'll make a pattern of buckshot on your stern!"

Under such cogent direction the fisherman's rig was soon dismantled. As a final precaution Elijah had the steering-wheel unshipped and thrown overboard.

"I reckon your sting is drawn," he told the round-eyed crew. "Now stand by to receive your carrion."

Whisky Alec had struggled to his feet and stood swaying in the center of the deck.

"Make a line fast about his waist, mister," the Old Man ordered curtly. "Then you and two or three of your brave friends heave him over the side and pitch the end of the line to the other vessel. Up helm, somebody, and bear away— You baboons can come down from aloft now and put in a couple of days rerigging your schooner—I don't yet know her name."

Whisky Alec grinned feebly as he moved to the rail.

"You don't need to throw me," said he. "I'll jump."

He blinked hard to win back the full use of his eyes and twisted his neck gingerly to discover if it was broken. Then he became reflective.

"I've never seen but one man pull that 'kangaroo wallop' before—and he was second mate in the old *Glory of the West.* Some bucko, that feller was, too!"

"Yeah?" said Captain Welles slowly. "Yeah? Well, sonny, that there second mate was *me.*"

WHEN the good ship *Laska* docked in Halifax with her cargo of liquor still intact the crew, to a man, disappeared. When last seen they were making knots for the owners' office, headed by the mate.

An hour later Captain Welles issued from the cabin, bag in hand, and bade his vessel a lingering farewell. Trudging slowly up the hill from the harbor he paid little attention to the pedestrians whom he met until approaching him on the opposite side of the way he spied two figures that had a more than familiar outline. Indeed, one was the tall and taciturn Mr. Pease, senior member of the firm which owned the *Laska*, and the other, pattering at his elbow and keeping up a steady gush of talk, was her erstwhile mate.

Captain Welles cast his eyes to the front and gave them no heed; his business was with the office, and purely perfunctory at that. He would merely report his arrival—which of course they already knew—and receive his dismissal.

When, however, the approaching pair were nearly opposite, Mr. Pease suddenly cut across the street and planted himself in the way.

"Captain," said he without even the formality of a greeting, "what is the value of that cargo of liquor you brought in here?"

"Why—four thousand odd cases—only about a hundred thousand dollars, I reckon, *here*."

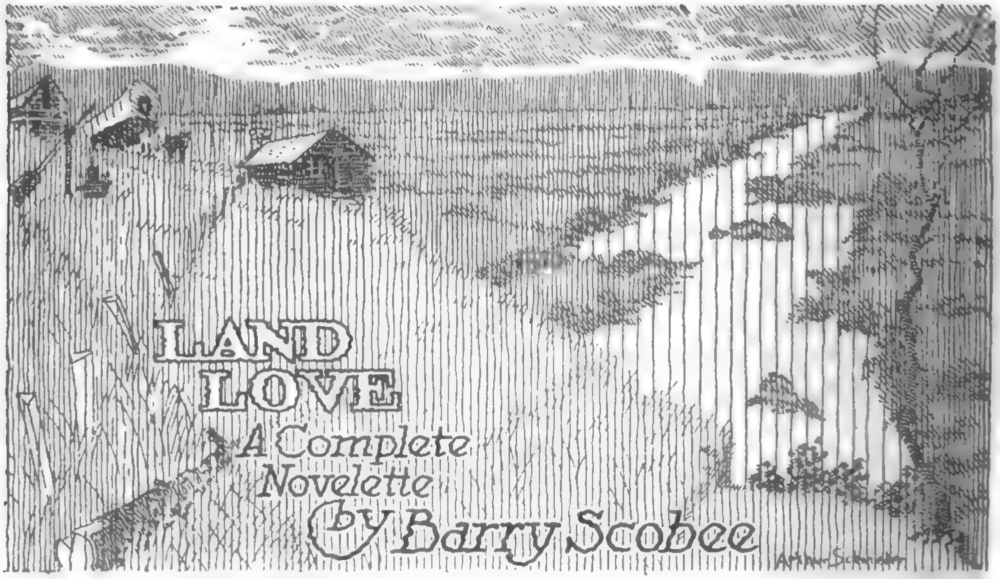
"Well then, Captain Welles, you've made the firm a present of just that much money unless the original owners try to recover, and if they do you bet they'll have to pay a pretty penny for the freight!"

Elijah Welles gaped.

"What?" he said; "you mean—" and got no farther.

"I mean we never sent you any orders to carry hootch or any cable instructions to go near Two Gun Cay. The whole thing was a frame-up by the bootleggers to get their goods carted free, and if what this young man tells me is true you appear to have acted in a highly creditable manner. To tell the truth, we were beginning to suspect you might have borrowed the vessel to take a flier of some sort on your own hook—not hearing from you for so long—but what *he* says——"

With a wink at Elijah Mr. Pease broke off to turn to the mate, but that young man had already recovered from his shock and his coat-tails were just disappearing around the nearest corner of the street.



Author of "Gamblers' Qualifications," "The Derelict Ranch," etc.

ALL day long the covered wagon had crawled like a clumsy, inquiring insect among the abandoned homesteads and through broken land along the Missouri River.

By late afternoon the horses were weary of the rough way, and the grim and grizzled driver was weary too, and chilled to the marrow by the wind of latter March that was piercing despite a bright sun.

When the sun was an hour from setting the outfit climbed a hill and came into sight of a pretty shelf, the first back from the river bottom. The horses stopped of their own accord to pant and tremble, while old "Dad" Roundwell stared and whistled a long-drawn note of pleased surprize.

Dad had been hunting land for thirty years. He was a connoisseur in Government quarter-sections, though he had never filed on one.

But he meant to file this trip. He reached out with his boot-toe and touched a rifle, as if it were the friend that would see him through.

The gracious, sunny land sloped gently off toward the brink of the shelf, a wheat-field waiting to be born. Immediately below the wagon, scarcely shouting distance away, was a farmstead—small, snug log house, stable, well, smoke-house. Dad took them in one by one: Two hay-stacks, a young orchard, kitchen-garden fenced with wire.

"That homesteader," commented Dad to his fierce young collie dog on the seat beside him, "picked himself a right smart place, hey, Spice?"

Spice whimpered restlessly.

Dad puckered his eyes in a harder look. The place seemed uninhabited, abandoned. No smoke from the brick chimney, windows gaping without shades; no livestock about the stable, no paths visible between the house and outbuildings, nothing but untrampled grass and weeds.

The sloping grass land, broken country to east and west; the river bottom, the glassy water, and the low-lying purple hills in the low sun.

"God!" he exclaimed reverently. "She's just what I've been combing the plains for the last thirty year! I ain't never in my life laid my orbs on to no such quarter-section and scenery surroundings. Not in the Cherokee Strip, New Mexico, Colorado, Nebrasky, nor even in Kansas. If she was a lone woman—but shucks, ain't no man on earth going to up and aband such a mate as this."

Dad tried to put down his stirring hope that this piece of land might be free for settlement. But despite years of failure and hopes that a thousand times had fallen to ashes, hope again r'ared up in him and would not be quelled. He drew a scrap of paper from his pocket. The land commissioner in the nearest town—thirty miles or so from here—had given it to him. It contained descriptions of unclaimed quarter-sections. With roving, restless eye Dad picked out a probable corner where he might find a corner stake. As he started off in that direction he called out to the collie, and pointed:

"Spice, you stay and watch the wagon and horses. Watch!"

Though Spice was eager to chase jack-rabbits he went obediently and sat down in front of the horses, just beyond the wagon-tongue.

Dad hoped to find a corner stake bearing the cryptic description of the land records. In the process of searching in the dry, rustling grass—and scaring out a pair of jackrabbits—he reached the brink where the pretty field fell away to the river bottom. The bottom was dotted with silt patches, drift trash, clumps of willows and cotton-wood. Right at hand was the path up which the builder of the house and stable had dragged his cotton-wood logs. And close by Dad's keen eye found the corner marker, and it was lettered in faded blue—

se¼ sec 36 twp——

The old man ran his eye down the column of figures from the land office, and there was the same description. He read it out in full—

"Southeast quarter of section thirty-six, township"—and so on, with township-number and range.

Dad's fingers trembled a little.

"But it ain't true," he told himself. "Land comish has made a mistake puttin' these figures down. Ain't no man in creation would of put up them buildings and neglected to file on the land, or gone off and abanded a prize quarter like this. I'm a fool even to think so for half a secont."

He pondered the scene hopefully.

"Shucks," he scoffed. "No man would up and leave a mate like this. She's the purtiest land God ever left out in the sunshine! Quit your hopin', you old pest."

He unhitched Hide and Seek, but paused on turning to the well, tempted yet to ride back to the land-office town before somebody could get ahead of him. The South Dakota papers had carried items about these abandoned claims, how a run of short crops and cold Winters had driven out the settlers unprepared for such hardships.

The claims thus had been widely advertised. The country was full of land hunters, for this was early March when farm leases were expiring and renters were trying to get homesteads of their own. But in the face of these facts, the old land-hungry pilot of a prairie schooner shook his head.

"Nope, I'll not go. The comish put down the wrong figgers. But, mister, she's a bride fit for a shinin' bridegroom!"

The kindly man found a rope and bucket in his crammed wagon and watered the horses at the well. Then he stood them in the grass-grown stalls and got the cramped door shut cozily, and fed them of his slender stock of cracked corn and oats. There was a fascination about this. He hung the harness on the pegs and stepped outside feeling quite chesty, as if the place were actually his—and came face to face with two men who had ridden around the corner of the house.

THE pair of strangers, there on their good horses, looked like father and son. They were clad warmly in tight-buttoned mackinaws. They carried rifles in saddle-boots, had bed-rolls behind their cantles. Before they could speak Spice came dashing up, growling.

The younger man of the pair did a strange thing. He shrank back at sight of the dog, and reached out a groping hand, like a small boy turning to his parent in alarm. Then catching himself in this act, he straightened and threateningly drew his rifle from its boot.

"To the wagon, Spice!" ordered Dad sharply.

The dog retreated. The gun went back into the boot. Then both men spoke a greeting—

"Howdy!"

"Howdy, gents," returned Dad noncommittally, wondering if these were the owners of the prize homestead.

Their next words enlightened him.

"Have you filed on this claim?" asked the older man.

Dad considered rapidly. If he said "no", these two riders on sturdy horses might strike out for the land office immediately, and if the quarter were open for settlement, would seize it right from under Dad's hands. If on the other hand he replied that he had filed on it he would be telling a lie, and he shrank from lying about these acres. He did not wish to stain them with dishonesty. They seemed sacred. So he evaded, bluffing a little, making as if he were landlord here:

"Get down, gents. Make yourselfs at home. We'll have grub right soon now."

The youth and the man slid from their saddles. Spice, under the wagon, threw out a throaty growl.

"Spice!" warned Dad. "Swaller that threatening! No way to treat company."

"He bites me," spoke up the younger man, half-rising into the saddle again, "I'll—I'll——"

There was a curious touch of hysteria in him, as if he mortally feared dogs.

"He'll not bite if left alone," Dad assured him. "Water your mounts, gents. Bucket and rope on the curb. And stable 'em. You-all got feed?"

"All we have is some sandwiches for ourselves. Expected to hit a farmhouse for the night."

"You've hit one all o. k. Feed for the horses in the sack there."

"If we could get some coffee—" came the suggestion.

"Cawfee? Comin' up, gents," responded Dad in the manner of a waiter. "And spuds and salt pork and bannock. Ain't got much to be hospitable with, but I believe in openin' my doors to strangers out on a cold night like this and fur from town."

"You've filed on this tract, have ye?" asked the senior member of the pair again.

Dad grunted in a muffled way, not caring what he seemed to say so long as he knew inside of himself that he was not telling a lie about the land.

They proceeded to water their horses. Dad got busy kindling a fire. He watched the strangers. They could not keep their eyes from straying around the place. The father was tall and slim and sinisterly grim; the son, much like him, lacked the grimness but was mocking and impudent in his manner. Both had arrogant ways.

One of their horses, eager for water, nosed a full pail from the hands of the young man, who cursed violently and kicked the horse cruelly under the flank.

"Hey, you stop that!" blazed old Dad Roundwell. "Don't go abusing a dumb beast that way around me! Anything I can't stand it's that."

"Can that stuff, old man," retorted the youth. "It's only a livery stable hack anyhow, not mine."

"You cur—and apologizin' to the cur for the insult!" flung Dad.

"Here, here!" admonished the older

stranger. "You two don't need to eat one another up. We all got to sit down to supper together yet. Guess introductions are in order. My name is Smoot, and this is my son Andy. He's right proud to call himself a rough and ready man."

"M'name's Roundwell," grunted Dad.

"Roundwell. Well, well!" The man chuckled in his attempted lightness. "Land hunting, I presume? Country's full of 'em."

Dad ignored the prying. He kept at supper preparations, bringing wood from a cotton-wood log, rendering fat salt pork, peeling spuds to fry in the grease. Smoot tried to help at these things obsequiously. He kept up a running talk designed to flatter the host.

"You have a good eye for land," he said once to Dad. "You old codger you, you could tell more about a claim in a minute than I could in a week! How 'bout, Mr. Roundwell?"

Dad sniffed. He mistrusted men who became flattering on short acquaintance.

"He-he-he!" tittered the Smoots, to fill in the obvious silence.

Father and son put down their dry sandwiches and went to looking about the buildings in the gathering darkness. Dad was not above a bit of strategy, and when he heard the pair talking inside the house he listened at a window.

"Certainly the place for us," he heard Smoot say.

"Open to the river," Andy answered. "Get the stuff on to the boats easy."

"Houses already built to hand. And there'll never be any near neighbors on either side. Land's too broken. And we could put the still under the shelf down there and the smoke never would be seen in Kingdom Come."

"We'd make a fortune before we got caught!" exulted Andy. "And afterwards we'd have this place left."

"We'll have it too, boy! We'll have it or know why! It's all made to our needs and likings."

Dad slipped back to his cooking. The Smoots came and sat down, talking of the land they had seen in the course of the day's riding. Once when the old man returned from the gusty darkness with more slivers of wood he found the two perusing a slip of paper down close to the fire.

The paper looked like the same sort of yellow memorandum square that the land commissioner had used in so accommodatingly putting down the list of unsettled homesteads for Dad. Thought Dad—

"Now if this quarter is listed on their list too it'll be purty good evidence that the comish didn't make a mistake, but that this place is open for filing."

In the old land hunter's listed column of figures, the column was spread out at the bottom like a spraddle-legged windmill tower, and "*se¼ sec* 36" was at the very bottom.

As Dad replenished the blaze he bent close to see the paper the others were poring over. It *was* a duplicate of his list! The column of figures was spread at the bottom, in the commissioner's careless manner, and the last line was "*se¼ sec* 36."

Dad let his repressed hope swell like a sponge. This was ample proof! This queenly quarter was open for settlement! Open for settlement! The veteran pilot of a prairie schooner that had nosed here and there over six states searching for *the* homestead, could scarcely keep from shouting to the starry sky above him.

And these two strangers at his fire had an equal chance with him for filing!

THE Smoots, father and son, ate heartily of the spuds and salt pork and drank deeply of the coffee. And as the meal progressed a curious thing took place. The Smoots quit their talkativeness and their obsequious coddling of the old man, as if they had their supper now and no longer had to josh and joke to be sure of getting it. Dad felt the change.

With his last swallow of coffee Smoot set the tin cup down on the ground with an arrogant, belligerent slap.

"This is the finest quarter-section I've ever seen," he announced. "It's almost worth hangin' for."

The two filled pipes and scrooged down close to the cozy blaze. Smoot junior shot out a leering question—

"How does it feel, old man, to be owner of a chunk o' earth like this?"

"Ummm!" Dad evaded.

"You like this location?" asked Smoot.

"I sho' do," answered the old man.

Then to show them what years of hoping and hunting they had to contend with if they tried to win this quarter from him, and also simply because he was full to overflowing with this place and loved to talk land, as a lover loves to talk about his sweetheart when he finds a listening ear, Dad turned loose his enthusiasm:

"Yes-sir, I do like it. I been hankerin' for a place like this ever since I cast my first vote for Grover Cleveland. Fine soil, plenty o' water, little huntin' maybe along the river, town som'ers in a day's ride, a view. Sure do admire a view. Did you notice at sunset, gents, that you can see acrost the river for fifty miles, likely? Hey, did you notice that?"

"Rats!" snorted Andy, and Smoot slowly shook his head.

"Then you don't hanker for the land, down in your hearts!" declared Dad. "Me, now— Made that Oklahoma Cherokee Strip run, in ninety-three you recollect. I trundled down from Missouri in a covered wagon like this one, and a span o' sorrel mules, and I laid along that border waiting for the starting guns to be fired and a-looking over at that level land with my mouth a watering for a quarter-section off o' it.

"When finally them troopers fired their guns at noon and the stampede started, I was there in the lead, a brash young man hittin' out for prosperity and a-dodgin' prairie-dog holes like a squirming lizard. I staked me a claim, and I see strange sights, too.

"I see two fellers get on the same claim, and settle who gets it by usin' their rifles, and both was killed. I see two women riding one mule. And I see, after the stampede has past me, a girl with big brown eyes come along walking.

"She and me talked a minute or two, she a joshing like a good feller, but plumb scared about getting no land. Tears got into them big glowin' eyes o' hers, and I up and give her my claim. I'd beat the stampede once and could do it again—only I didn't. I couldn't find another quarter to stake that was worth the trouble."

In the silence that came, Spice crept up and bellied down beside his master. When Andy saw the dog he hunched back as a cat would have done.

"Then I hitched up to a woman," Dad continued, "a good woman, and we mosied around over the country, always keepin' an eye out for some land to settle down on. One year below Guthrie we tried cotton. Busted. The babies begin to stack up on us.

"We driv across the Panhandle of Texas—Amarillo, Tascosa on the Canadian. Got so the far-away hills was always looking green and we didn't stay long anywhere. New Mexico, here and there, eastern slope of Colorado. Too high there for the wife an' we eked it into the sand hills of Nebraska. Years kept rollin' by.

"Wanting land, wanting land, a place of my own where a family could live. Once we found a place to our liking and planned to let a bull kill an old bachelor-rancher, down toward Concordia, Kansas, the old woman and me did, so's we could get the land by forgery; but the plan got top heavy and we give it up. My, what a relief it was, to have the thing off our minds!

"Then the family broke up and went off on different trails—marriage—and war—and the Divide—

"For quite a while now I been exclusively alone, shuttling back and forth between the hopes of finding land som'ers.

"Once I read in the Sunday paper about how the Anglo-Saxons took England once in the right early days by clinging to the land like leeches, and how they spread and spread might nigh over all the world—in Australia, and Canady, and the good old U. S. A., hunting land and finding it and settling thereon and establishing Christian homes, schools and voting precincts.

"Don't that make a fine picture, gents? The white race spreading itself out over the face of the earth because they love land and want a quarter-section to call their own.

"Then, gents, I read about obanded homesteads up here. A month back in a Feb'uary snowstorm down towa'd Kansas City, Kansas, I hitched up and loaded on all I got in this world and hit up here to get me a home.

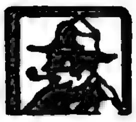
"I aim to have a claim this time, and they ain't nothing but God can say me nay—and God ain't built that way. He don't deprive nobody."

Spice sat up at the ringing twang of these words and growled. Dad put him down. The Smoots sat stolidly, until the father abruptly bent forward, finger out-thrust, and sang out—

"Old man, I'm asking you fair, have you filed on this quarter?"

Because Dad Roundwell must answer this gouging question at last, and because he could not lie where his sacred land was involved, he quietly told the truth—

"No, sir, I ain't filed on it, but I'm aiming to."



IN THE face of Dad Roundwell's confession that he was not the prospective owner of the quarter-section, a change came over the Smoots. Their sudden tenseness gave way to relaxation and broad yawns, and they guessed it would be early to bed and early to rise for them.

"Want to keep on with our land hunting tomorrow," Smoot declared.

Dad dug in the ashes with a stick and pondered. The situation was blue. Here were two strong men on good horses that were not so weary as Hide and Seek, men armed with rifles, men of a desperate breed wanting this land for its own value and for an illicit purpose.

But the old land chaser was far from hopeless. He had been in the hole too many times to lie and take the count. Something'd turn up. Something always had.

"I guess," said Smoot, obsequious again, "you'll be able to lend us a little bed cover for the night, won't you, Mr. Roundwell?"

Dad did not answer. He got up and paced back and forth. Once he was minded to get his rifle from the wagon and take this pair into custody. The rifle had significance with Dad. He had seen them used, had used them—to bluff with, never yet having pulled the trigger on a fellow being. But he dropped that thought. Presently he paused in his pacing.

"I been thinking," said he. "It's purty cold for you to bed down outside under the high-up blue. But inside the house, now, with plenty of soogins and a feather-bed it ought to be like a hotel."

"Sure! Fine!"

Dad climbed into the wagon and threw into reaching arms his good feather-bed with its old-fashioned narrow-blue-stripe ticking, a pair of blankets and three quilts, which was the total amount of his bedding. It was his sudden plan for the Smoots to sleep cozily and well while he remained awake.

Father and son made their bed down inside the house, while Dad pretended to make his in the wagon. He went through the motions, even to yanking off his boots and commenting about how tight they were. Then he watched from under the canvas wagon-cover, making Spice beside him keep quiet.

Lying under their warm covers, the two took goodnight smokes. The moon was bright in the eastern sky and made sufficient light in the house for the watcher to see vague movement.

After a time snoring sounded. Dad decided they were asleep and was about to climb out of the wagon—telling Spice to watch—when Smoot senior appeared in the doorway, peering out inquiringly. Dad felt for his rifle, hot with the thought that he would use it rather than to be outdone. But Smoot seemed satisfied and went back to the pallet. Yet instead of sleeping he smoked, and Dad felt that he was only biding his time to play some trick of the land grabber. The old man resolved to lose no time.

The back end of the wagon was close to the little front porch. Dad got on his boots and crept to the front of the wagon and got down. He crawled on hands and knees to the shadow of the stable. With cautious work he got the door open without a hail coming from the Smoots.

Dad was exultant, and he permitted no grass to grown under his feet. Since Spice was warned to stay in the wagon to watch, he had only the horses to deal with. With the harness bridles on their heads, he led them forth with as little commotion as possible. The noisy wind muffled sounds. He had no saddle. He mounted one of the brawny bays, built more for wagon and plow than riding, and, leading the other, buttoned his old mackinaw close to him and bent into the gale, grimly determined to be first at the land office thirty miles or so away.

NO ROAD lay across the broken land. That was yet for some pioneer to trace out, so far as Dad knew. The old man kept as much as he could, without extensive detours, northward along the ridges. Two or three times he saw lights twinkling like stars in remote homes of settlers.

Hour after hour he left the bleak country behind, changing from one horse to another frequently so as not to tire them more than necessary. Dad was alert with ear and eye to learn if he were followed, but never in the rearward gloom was he able to make out approaching bulks of horsemen.

The wind penetrated and numbed. The north star blinked as coldly as ice.

He had begun to estimate the hour—he had no watch—at one o'clock in the morning, having started from his wagon at about half-past eight, when it seemed he could tolerate the cold no longer. Then it was that he saw under the rim of a hill the glimmer of a camp-fire.

Dad drew near boldly, determined to stop and warm if he could. A dog began to bark and growl savagely, and when Dad drew near the fire he made out a figure wrapped in a blanket. A man got to his feet and spoke out:

"Hello! Who be ye? What's up?"

"Traveler."

Dad slid stiffly from the bony back of old Hide.

"I'm nigh cut asunder by the wind and this horse's backbone. I'd like to warm my flesh and bones by your fire."

"If that's true, help yourself," a whiney-voiced man invited. "So pestering cold I froze out myself. Got up and built a fire to get warmed up."

The man huddled under his blanket again. He seemed to be a frail, helpless sort of individual. Dad squatted as nearly over the willow-wood blaze as he could without his garments catching fire.

He chafed his hands and chafed them. When the ache was reduced in his bare fingers and his body, he took notice of the outfit around him—rickety wagon, watchful cur dog, two small and bony horses, and a man with wind-blown hair eyeing him suspiciously from out of his old blanket. Dad had no intention however of revealing his purpose of riding like an outlaw in the night. He pulled out a plug of tobacco and bit off a chew.

The man's eyes brightened. He spoke with new hope—

"Could you spare me a bite o' that sustenance?"

The plug was passed across the fire. The stranger seized it hungrily, and measuring with thumb and eye set his teeth well into it. He laid the plug down on a chunk of wood nearer to himself than Dad, and he took the piece from his teeth and bit it half in two, beginning to masticate one piece lustily while he pocketed the other scrap.

" 'Scuse me," he begged—chew, chew, chew—"but that's the first bite of chewin' I've had for three days. I ain't got a penny."

Dad had a little money and a generous heart, so he answered:

"Keep the whole brick. Know how a feller feels without the companionship of a cud."

While Dad warmed more, the night camper chewed and spat himself into sociability.

"Ridin' fur?" he inquired.

"Town."

Dad's gesture meant any town.

"For the doctor?"

"Nope." Dad veered away from this pinchy subject with a personal question. "Which way you heading for?"

The question was a key that unlocked the scrawny, sandy-haired one. He swelled with pride, and he spoke out full-voiced:

"Me? M'name's Potter, and I'm headin' for the finest A-number-one homestead in South Dakota."

Dad was startled half out of his skin, for there was but one A-number-one finest homestead, and that was the one he meant to file on. Could it be this man's property? Could the fellow have filed on it? For one jumping second Dad contemplated murder as a safety-first step, then he made a stab, blandly, to find out—

"Oh, you figgering on filing somewhere, hey?"

Potter withdrew into himself like a Kansas dry land-turtle when thumped on the shell. Dad went on, blandly, not appearing to notice:

"Where is this first-class, high, low and the jack place, Mister Potter? I'd like to ride past and see it sometime."

"Me to know and you to find out!" retorted Potter, and added with thick significance, "I'd hoped to get in some sleep here by the fire."

"You will, s'far's I'm concerned," Dad snapped. "I'll be ridin' on."

He got up, the dog growling savagely.

"Twang, cease yo' meddling!" admonished Potter.

Dad threw himself up breast-wise then astride of old Seek. This traveler's allusion to the finest quarter-section made Dad uneasy, powerful uneasy, and doubtful; but he had no other thought than to ride on and on until he learned the facts at the land office.

"G'up, Seeky," he commanded. "We got to breast this heah pert wind a mite longer. But we ought to be glad we got strong breasts to breast it with."

SO OLD Dad Roundwell, lean land hunter of the Prairie States, easy going home finder, had not ridden further on his journey than three miles when a rifle shot cracked over his head and he jerked around to behold two horsemen galloping after him in the moonlight. He heard the pound of hoofs, saw the spurt of another rifle shot.

"Hold up there!" he bellowed back on the wind. "You're liable to hit one o' my horses! If you do, I'll tan the hide clean off o' yo' backs."

"More liable to hit you," retorted the voice of Andy Smoot, as the two horsemen slowed down.

"Huh! Thought you'd put one over on us!" snarled the elder Smoot. "We'll hog-tie you!"

"What you mean?"

"Mean we're going to get to the land office before you do!"

"Hog-tie me and leave me on the prairie to freeze? That'd be murder pure and simple, gents."

"We don't intend to murder you, unless we have to. Less you try some trick, like your slippin' away tonight. Never'd 'a' guessed you were gone but that collie o' your's got to whimpering and whining. We'll ride on till we figure out how to hang you."

Dad, at their direction, rode ahead, leading his other horse with its clumsy bridle. The Smoots talked in wind-blown voices. Dad made out that they were worried about disposing of him. He heard the youth say:

"We can ride away from them plugs of his, but he'd have time to get to town before the land office would be open. That would give him an even break with us."

Unexpectedly the little party found itself within hailing distance of a settler's place, small house, barn, a shed or two, and haystacks.

"Say!" exclaimed Andy. "This is the place, dad, that we saw coming out, about ten miles from town. Nobody home. We might stop and warm."

"Ha-ha-ha! You cold?"

Smoot laughed scoffingly at his lusty son.

They kept on, the boy silent, until they were abreast of the house, when Smoot brought up sharply.

"Hi, stop! I've got a scheme for getting shut of this old bird. It will work too!"

They turned to the house. Smoot got down and tried the front door, then the kitchen door. Finding them locked he tried the windows, and at last shoved his fist through a pane and reaching in lifted out a stick that kept the sash from being raised.

"Get the horses tied to the fence," he instructed, "then we'll climb inside here."

When the three had clambered through the window, and a kerosene lamp was lighted, Smoot kindled a fire in the one stove, a cook-stove. He chuckled sinisterly.

"What are you going to do, dad?" asked Andy.

"Going to get rid of this old land grabber?"

"How? What you going to do? Burn him up piece by piece?"

Andy was big-eyed with excitement, was cruel, and skeptical too.

"Going to leave you here to do it," said the father.

Dad detected Smoot's facetiousness and cruelty. He could not guess what was intended. He was not really alarmed. He crowded up to the stove with the others when the fire burned to get warm.

Thawed out, Smoot boiled a pot of coffee, and he and the youth drank heartily. The elder then took up the rugs from the floor and hung them over the two windows.

"In case," he said, "some of this settler's neighbors wake up they won't see lights here at two A.M. and get suspicious."

He stuffed a pillow where he had broken out the pane. All through this Andy had kept still and watched. Now he asked—

"Whatcha going to do, dad?"

Without answering Smoot went outside, through the kitchen door, to return presently with two lengths of halter rope.

"Going to tie this old eagle and let you stay here in a nice cozy room to keep warm. Don't want papa's little son to get cold."

"Don't get funny!" exploded Andy. "I'm no baby. Guess you were cold too."

"Didn't whine around about it, or talk about stopping and getting warm."

"Bet you thought it though!" retorted the son.

"That's enough out of you! Old man, I'm going to tie you and keep you here till I file on that piece of land. Get me? You might as well lie down on the bed there and be tied and take it easy, because you sure are going to be tied bedfast."

"You'll have the job of doing it then!" Dad informed him.

They did it. Dad did not fight it too much. Feeling their combined strength he knew there was no use. But it was not in his heart to lie down and be tied without an effort to keep his freedom.

"Now listen, son," said Smoot when the

job was finished. "You'll stay here awake and on watch with your rifle. I'll ride on and file on the land. Then I'll come back past here for you. There'll be no witnesses against us, unless the settler who lives here comes back. And if he does, tell him the old bird's off in the mind and we're looking out for him. I'll say to you, old feller, that we won't stand for any monkey business, now or afterward. Get that? Get that, Andy? Don't take anything off of him in the way of threats."

"I ain't dumb or a fool," purred Andy. "I'll use my wits."

"See you do, then! If anything goes wrong about this I'll lick ye, if ye are a man grown!"

Andy grunted. Smoot senior went out. Presently Dad heard him ride away. Then he gave his attention to him who was sometimes a cruel and brawny man and sometimes showed the curiosity and mannerisms of a tough youth.

OLD Dad Roundwell had been a gawking, inquiring youth himself, so he read Andy Smoot's mind as an open book. He saw the prying eyes start a tentative survey of the room that was kitchen, parlor and bedroom. Dad knew what he was thinking—

"Here I am, boss of the situation, with a houseful of new things to see and investigate!"

Andy first examined a shotgun in one corner of the room; and next a woman's curling-iron on a dresser. He looked at the pictures on the walls, and Indian arrowheads stuck on a cardboard, pulling one off—prowled here and there. Well started, he returned to the center table, across which lay his rifle, and pulled out the drawer.

"What you looking for?" Dad demanded sharply.

Andy started guiltily, but answered brazenly—

"For a pack o' cards to play solitaire with and keep awake."

"You haven't any right, mister, to go through the private possessions of this settler."

"Aw, dry up!"

To show that he was boss, Andy dug into the drawer, pausing occasionally to examine some odd thing his fingers found—such as a string of Indian beads and a tiny ivory elephant. At last he found cards and spread them out for Canfield, but he did not finish a single game before he was up and prowling again. He went to a trunk.

"Careful there!" warned Dad. "That's ultra private. May be a lady's."

Andy smirked and went on with his investigating. Nothing in the till interested him much. He set the till out and searched more deeply. Something toward the bottom engaged his curiosity. He yanked out a framed picture. It was almost as long as the trunk and no wider than his two palms.

A perverse curiosity came to Dad to see the picture. It was as if somebody were standing behind him and he did not know who it was. But the old man's legs were securely tied from hips to ankles, and his wrists were tied behind him. Smoot had known something about knots.

Andy gawked at the picture. He muttered and stumbled over the title, then spoke it out:

" 'Outlaw's Nem—Nem-e-sis.' What does nemesis mean, old man?"

"Let's see the picture."

Andy turned the picture. Dad made out a buzzard floating high in the sky, and far down beneath, on a cactus-covered hillside a man in the garments of a western wilderness rider—his peaked hat fallen aside, his gun lying by his relaxed figure, his canteen upside-down, the man lying on his back, open-mouthed, staring in horrible fascination at the floating bird.

"Nemesis," said Dad, "why, nemesis means—let's see——"

"Don't you know?" Andy taunted.

"Why, nemesis is a thing that keeps after you, and keeps after you, when you've done something wrong. That buzzard kept after the outlaw because the outlaw had done something wrong. Like you going through that trunk. That's wrong. Some kind of nemesis will get after you. Maybe an accident, or sickness—unless you quit and repent. Maybe a horse will kick you. Or it might be worse. The worse the crime the worse the nemesis. Keepin' me a prisoner here now——"

"Cut that out!" said Andy hoarsely, tensed-up, big eyed—too much so for a grown man. "You can't scare me!"

"Keep me a prisoner, cheating me out of my land," went on Dad. "No telling what might pursue you. Flights of angels——"

The old man remembered the fear Andy had shown toward the collie.

"Or a pack of dogs, for instance."

The shot told on Andy. He flung the picture from him. His face was drawn.

"I ain't afraid!" he croaked. "You can't scare me."

But Dad saw that he had scared him, had scared him so badly that he felt sorry for him. He said no more, out of sheer pity.

Andy got back to the table and resumed his solitaire, but for the time being the wind was gone from his sails.

Andy was rough and ready, though. He recovered himself. And becoming normal he grew sleepy, got to nodding.

Dad watched the process covertly. The young man's going to sleep might be the old land seeker's way out of his dilemma and on to the land office.

Andy strove hard to remain awake. He set his chin on his fists and tried to keep his heavy lids open by looking straight at Dad. But the fatigue of the day, the night riding, was too much for his thick body. He dozed.

Dad had in mind getting a butcher-knife on an adjacent shelf into his teeth and somehow see-sawing the ropes. He made a movement on the bed. Andy's eyes were open instantly. He touched the gun and winked heavily.

"Next time," thought the old man, "I'll try to cut the ropes on the jagged glass where Smoot punched the pane in. I'll kick the pillow out."

He got himself into position to make the attempt, while Andy looked on, as if trying to make himself easier on the bed. His knees were doubled close to the window. When the time came he would have only to insert his feet behind the rug, that Smoot had hung there, work the pillow out and, if he could, see-saw the rope in two.

Andy threw all his physical energy into keeping awake, then his mental energy, but his mind, still youthful, was not equal to the task. Despite that he got up and walked around the room, then he pulled the pillow from the window to let some cool air in. In the longest hours before the break of day he drooped more and more.

And at last, again at his Canfield, he dozed on his arm, his closed eyes toward Dad.

Dad waited patiently this time. At last a snore came. Dad's legs slid toward the swaying rug and jagged glass. It was a careful journey, destined not to end as he had foreseen, for in the middle of the movement he heard a new sound.

The thought came that Smoot senior had returned. Yet the noise was too lightly made for a horse.

Then he heard a whimper and knew. Spice! The dog, finding master and horses gone, could not stand it alone and had trailed them. Dad could have recognized the collie under any circumstances. He remembered Andy's fear of the dog. A plan leaped out of his hopeless position.

Instead of see-sawing at the rope, he exerted every muscle to work the window-sash up. At the last it ascended with a little rattle and run. The push of the wind blew the rug back, and Spice came leaping lightly to the sill, then into the room.

The jar of the dog's landing caused Andy's eyes to open. He beheld the dog not six feet away. He must have thought of nemesis. He did not pause to reason nor to grasp his rifle. He leaped backward, upsetting his chair, and stood against the wall, eyes protruding, arms outspread, panting.

Dad was up too. He leaped awkwardly with his bound legs to the table and knocked the rifle off. This was done almost as quickly as Andy got to the wall.

"Stand were you are," he bawled, "or I'll let this dog chew you to scraps!"

"Keep him off!" pleaded Andy. "Keep him off!"

"I'll keep him off, but you've got to do what I say."

Dad had the natural advantage over Andy in that experience had taught him to pursue opportunity swiftly, while Andy had not yet learned to awaken quickly and get himself in hand.

Dad went in his bound-legged jumps toward Andy. Spice was snarling and wild with excitement. Dad kept calling to him to stay back, else he would have sprung up on the shrinking Smoot. The old man flung himself, back to Andy.

"Untie my hands! No tricks! The dog'll devour you!"

Trembling fingers fumbled at the knots. The collie was leaping, snarling, almost beside himself. Dad kept shouting for him to get back.

At last the ropes loosened. Dad jerked his arms free.

He went leaping to the rifle, got it up in the instant that Andy seemed ready to make his first intelligent move to jump for it.

Andy knew then that he was beaten.

"Your pa'd enjoy this," drawled Dad. "You can finish your nap, Mister Smoot, lying there in my place on the bed all bound round with these ropes, while I go on to town."

THE approach of morning had no effect on the wind. It still poured out of the North when Dad and Spice stepped from the door of the settler's house, with young Smoot securely bound within. Thick darkness was over the land.

Hide and Seek were not tied to the fence. Wondering if Smoot had been thoughtful enough to stand them in the stable, Dad went to look. He found only Andy's mount there. He searched around for the horses, circling the hay-stacks and outbuildings once, then extending the circle. The reliable old beasts were not to be found.

The land hunter was tempted to ride Andy's mount, but held back because he was determined not to do anything that would get him opposed to the law lest he be thrown into jail before he could attend to filing on the land. With this idea of caution, Dad took the Smoot rifle that he had brought out and leaned it in the darkness beside the door. He would not take it lest he be charged with theft.

As to the act of binding Andy—that was no more than an act of self-defense. And it was necessary, whatever came of it.

"Spice," said he, "only one thing to do, and you and me'll do it. Walk to town."

They set out, breasting the gale again. After two or three miles northward Dad saw twinkling town-lights ahead. This was assurance that he had not lost himself on the almost fenceless and roadless prairie. He swung into a freer, long-striding gait.

Questions came up for answering. Was the land open for settlement? Where was Smoot? Where were the horses? Had Smoot driven them a-stray on the prairie or had he led them to town.

Hungry, chilled, eager, the old lover of the land arrived in the town with daylight well abroad. It was a cold and snappy morning. The town was not up. Only the restaurants and livery stables were open.

Dad headed straight for the land office, expecting to find Smoot camped on the door step. But Smoot was not there, and at this hour the office was closed.

There was one thing for Dad to do, to make certain his first chance when the office should be opened—sit down with his back to the door and wait until the commissioner arrived.

And Dad set his back immovably against the door and proceeded to wait, Spice beside him.

When the town livened up men stopped to talk to the old eagle on watch. He was of the sort to make friends. He made friends now, so that when the commissioner finally came Dad had three men sticking by to see how he made it.

Dad's heart was in his throat as the commissioner's key rattled in the door.

"I found a quarter-section," he started in, "that you had in that list you made for me. Wonder if it's been filed on—place with a log house and a——"

"Wait a minute, old scout," laughed the official. "I'm not land mad. I can't remember about every claim. A lot of people filed yesterday. Wait till I look at the plats."

The affable official got down what Dad would have called maps.

"I don't think it's open for filing," said Dad wearily. "It's got a house and stable and orchard and other buildings. Don't look as if any man would give up such a place, or fail to file on it."

"Oh, they do," declared the commissioner. "Right along. Some never get money to file. Some are driven out by poverty, or sickness. They go off and leave good homes for somebody else to file on. Those that are driven away by circumstances I call the 'Moral Owners.' "

The phrase, "Moral Owners," did not strike Dad significantly at the moment.

"Ummm—" began the commissioner a minute later—"southeast quarter of section thirty-six—is that what you said? Ummm—no, sir, that hasn't been filed on. You want to file on it?"

"I do!" squeaked Dad.

His hands were trembling.

The commissioner smiled gently. He was used to such as this.

"These men your friends?" he asked, nodding to the three who had crowded in. "They know all about you?"

"They'd sign their names to anything for me," declared Dad, mopping his brow. He felt faint. He sat down. "Gettin' married—that is, gettin' the piece of land you want sort of makes a feller feel shaky," he allowed.

Presently the papers were fixed. He paid the fee.

"Up to you and the Moral Owner now," avowed the commissioner. "Only failure to prove up can take it away from you."

Dad invited his new-found friends out to breakfast, but they thanked him and let him go alone.

When Dad, happy as a king, finished his ham and eggs and coffee he went visiting the two livery stables to see if he could find his horses. He did not find them, but he chanced to glance into the little office of the second stable and there saw Smoot asleep on the night man's cot.

Dad eased away, trying to recall the old story of the tortoise and the hare.

Dad struck out afoot for the place where he believed Smoot must have turned his horses loose. He was happier than a king—until two unwanted thoughts came together in his mind, slam-bang! One was of Sandy Potter, headed for the best A-number-one claim in South Dakota. The other thought was the two words, "Moral Owner."

DAD and Spice picked up a ride before they had left the town a mile behind. The man driving the car was talkative. He would have been glad to know all of Dad's business. But Dad was blandly evasive. He said nothing, for instance, of the junior Smoot he had left tied in the remote settler's home. Nor did he mention that he was looking for his two bony, bay horses. The driver might ask how they happened to be lost.

Dad made out the house in the distance and wondered if Andy had in any measure loosened his bonds. At about the same time he saw his horses on the leeward side of a hay-stack. He said that this was as far as he was going and left the car.

Hide and Seek had eaten holes into the stack. They still had on their blind bridles but both horses had got the bits out of their mouths. Dad mounted Hide, and leading Seek hit for his quarter-section twenty miles or more away—avoiding well the house where he had left Andy.

And all the while that old Dad Roundwell jogged along in the bright sunshine and keen wind there kept tumbling and whispering through his mind, like the refrain of a song or some silly word that gets started, the phrase of the commissioner—

"Moral Owner—Moral Owner——"

It was beyond the middle of the March afternoon when Dad at last climbed the slope and came to the top of the little ridge behind the buildings of the A-number-one claim. What he saw down by the house brought him to a stop, while Hide and Seek shot forward their ears and whinnied.

That which the troubled old man had been fearful of seeing, that he saw—the rickety wagon of Sandy Potter by the kitchen door, and Sandy watering his skinny animals at the well with Dad's rope and pail. Sandy's fierce mongrel dog sprang up and barked furiously. Dad clucked to the horses and rode hurriedly down the hill, while there raced through his thoughts:

"Moral Owner! Moral Owner!"

When he came around to the front of the house Potter had left his horses and was standing on the porch. The dogs Twang and Spice growled deep in their throats and sidled stiff-legged toward each other. The owners called the dogs harshly and sent them apart before facing each other. Potter was the first to speak.

"Hello," he said tentatively.

"Hello!" returned Dad grimly.

A silence reared up between them. They stared at each other in hostile fashion. Potter was the one to break.

"This your wagon?" he demanded.

"Yup," answered Dad. "Reckon you stopped to lunch before going on to your A-number-one homestead, hey?"

Potter chuckled unexpectedly at the humorous irony of the situation.

"Well," Dad went on, "I'm glad you've come by, because if you don't mind you can help me lift down my cook-stove and git her up, and the bed-stead, and so forth."

Without more ado, Dad slid down and watered Hide and Seek, and put them in the barn, then returning to the wagon begun to unload his goods from the rear end.

Potter made no move to help. He sat on the edge of the porch in the sun watching. To Dad he was the personification of stubborn laziness. At last he called out—

"All right, Mr. Potter, I'm ready to drag the stove foward, if you are."

"I ain't," said Potter.

"You begrudge helping a neighbor?"

"Don't begrudge. But you ain't a neighbor. And besides that I've got a talkin' streak on, and when I've got a talking streak on I can't work."

Dad saw that evasion might as well come to an end. If this were the Moral Owner—the owner of these buildings and orchard—they had better come to swords points about it. He got out of the wagon and sat down on an opposite corner of the porch.

"Say on," said he.

Potter gestured to the warming, gentle slope before them, to the orchard, the river, the distant purpling hills.

"Ain't that the purtiest sight you ever saw?" he asked. "Four years ago Nancy and me was sailin' around in a prairie schooner looking for a homestead. We'd been trying to homestead in Nebraska and the Dakotas for fifteen years. Yes, twenty years——"

Dad sneered openly:

"You amateur! I been trying to homestead for thirty year!"

"Nancy and me, we found a prize piece of land. Like the gift o' God, it was. We squatted on it, and built a house, and digged a well, and put up a stable for the horses, and a shanty for the fowls, and set out apple and cherry and pear trees we dug up out of an old abandoned nursery.

"I got a mighty hankering for the land. Medicine to me, it is. Clean, too, and comforting. I—I love the land."

Potter flushed at the confession of sentimentality, but went on:

"We never had money to work with, seemed. Nancy was ailing. Always ailing, poor thing. Two years we lived on this finest claim that ever laid out under the sun before she got so bad we had to up and go. She wanted to go back where her folks lived in Ioway.

"Well, we stayed in Ioway two years, me ekin' out a living here and there and her getting worse. Come last month, February, and she seen the sunset a-comin' for her, and she wanted to get back to the A-number-one claim once more. So I got this rickety wagon and these poor critters—willing but weary—and loaded on our goods and hit west.

"I was uneasy, because you see, mister, I'd never filed on this land of ours."

"And you claim to love the land!" exploded Dad.

"But we kept a-comin'," continued the scrawny one, "dwelling on the edge of hope, hoping nobody had filed on our place and that it would be vacant and waiting for us when we arriv'."

"Why didn't ye file at first?"

"Never had the cash for the fee."

"Why, I'd of mortgaged the horses and wagon—or my soul," said Dad, "loving the land as I do."

"I did," said Potter softly. "When Nancy got to hankering to turn west again, I stole money from—certain places where I was working. Put a mortgage on my honesty to pay it back sometime. When I stole, I knew somehow, down in my heart, that I'd get the A-number-one claim.

"But Nancy left me, en route. And I had to spend the money for her sickness and burial, and mortgaged the wagon and horses and goods too. Didn't have a dollar left. I stopped at the land office as I come through and the comish said the claim was still open for settlement. But I was shy the fee as per usual. That was yesterday morning."

"You'd—you'd call yourself the Moral Owner, I presume," observed Dad from a tight throat.

"I would," answered Potter, his loose and weary face going grim. "Have you filed on this quarter-section here, mister?"

"I have," replied Dad grimly, "and there ain't no power short o' God can make me relinquish!"

* * *

DAD ROUNDWELL started in to get his goods into the house, as if immediate, actual, visible possession would strengthen his title of filing, which it would not, seeing the other man had never filed at all. Potter made no offer to help Dad lug the things in until he got around to the stove again, then the sad and scrawny one sighed and joined in the task.

When the stove was up Potter left Dad to his work and himself brought in a rattletrap bedstead and an old mattress, a table, odds and ends, and a pot of beans that he set on the stove to warm. Dad beheld this with a bitter eye, mental turmoil within him.

As Dad went about the supper, getting corn-bread into the oven, and spuds to frying, Potter got in water and filled a hand-basin to wash. Absently he hung his cap on a peg behind the door and when he had washed he instinctively turned to a towel-roller on the wall that Dad had not seen.

"Nancy always kept a fresh towel there," said Potter.

They sat down at the table in silence. They ate with the ravenous hunger of men who have bucked a howling March wind for endless hours, and drank hot black coffee, yet they ate with a great burden over them. When they finished Potter pushed back from the table and said—

"Well, I feel a dum sight better, more like *settling questions*."

His looks belied his words, for he was utterly downcast.

"I been thinking," he went on. "You relinquish this claim and I'll pay you, say a thousand dollars, when I make it off the land."

Dad colored hotly under his weather-beaten skin.

"You think money could buy me off?" he snarled.

"Just what I expected," sighed Potter, shaking his weary head. "You love the land too."

"Tell *you* what *I'll* do," said Dad, itching for the moment to insult Potter back. "I'll pay you six-hundred dollars, say, for these buildings, when I make it off the land."

"Huh!" snorted Potter. "You're talking through your hat."

Potter twisted uneasily in his chair.

"I've got an alternative proposition," he blurted.

"Go on, go on."

"You got a gun?"

"Thirty-thirty rifle."

"Same here. I propose we fight a duel."

"Duel?" Dad bounced to his feet. "Settle it by shooting? I seen two fellers do that, Oklahoma Strip. Both got killed. But I'll go ye."

"I been thinking some more. If we both stand up and shoot at the same time we might both kill one another. No use to kill us both off, and let some other feller have the land."

"The Smoots for instance," interjected Dad.

"We'll toss up a coin for the first shot," suggested Potter. "If the feller misses, the other one of us gets the second shot."

"Shoot at fifty yards?" asked Dad.

"Suits me."

"But clean off of the claim," said Dad. "I wouldn't want to bloody up this dainty queen of a quarter-section with killing. Back of the hill there?"

Potter nodded agreement. Dad found a dime in a pocket and when the sandy one had chosen "heads" and himself accepted "tails" he tossed it up so fairly that the keen-eyed Potter found nothing to object about. The dime went rolling, and tottering, and fell over. They stooped, peering.

"Heads! Potter, you get the first shot!"

They got their guns. The dogs, scenting tragedy in the air, followed each at his master's heels, sober and ungrowling.

They went to the ridge back of the house from which Dad had first glimpsed the treasure claim just twenty-four hours before. The wind was high and as piercing as ever. The sun lay a-slant of the land, and the southward hills were purple.

"God," said Dad, "it's beautiful."

The old man stopped. Potter strode on along the ridge, counting his long steps, never once looking around suspicious that Dad might shoot him in the back. Dad was grateful for that, through his numbness. Potter stopped.

"Fifty yards," he called. "I'll—I'll give you the first shot if you want it, mister."

Potter's voice sounded curiously cramped. Dad could not answer at all, except to shake his head. Dad stood there, breast forward, waiting expectantly, a weary old land hunter of the plains, sticking by his creed of fair play as he saw it and by his newly acquired creed of honesty and cleanliness of heart for the land's sake.

Potter was hesitating, staring. Finally he called again—

"You a Christian, mister?"

"Nope!" shouted Dad. "I never joined any church."

Then a shot came, but not from Potter's rifle. It sounded off to the northward. Dad jerked around, and there, down the northward bad lands, coming out of a gully, were the Smoots, father and son. And the son had just fired his rifle.

DAD dropped down into the grass. He saw that Potter had done likewise. He doubted that the Smoots had seen the sandy one because of the contour of the land. Dad worked backward behind the comb of the ridge and sang out to Potter:

"Come here! We're attacked by some crooked land hunters!"

Potter came stooping and running. In a few hurried words Dad explained about the Smoots.

Dad crawled back to the comb and raised

to his knees. The Smoots saw him and both opened fire. They were riding and their aim was not good. They missed. Potter crawled to Dad's side. After a moment he said:

"Let's not let 'em get us. I'd ruther you have the claim than them strangers, after you givin' me that tobacco last night, and this friendship of our'n here."

Dad fired two shots but the Smoots kept coming.

"You're not shooting well," said Potter. "I'm going to stand up and pepper 'em."

The scrawny one rose to his full height, making a full-sized human target.

Dad instinctively comprehended the plan of the Smoots, or felt that he did. They were here to kill him, then they would furnish affidavits of his going and one of them file on the land. In a sudden splurge of wrath Dad got to his feet also.

With the two of them standing there, the Smoots checked their horses. Dad understood that too. They had expected to find only him. Both Smoots fired and the bullets whipped close.

Potter, quick as light, raised and fired, and Andy Smoot twisted in his saddle as from an impact.

"Hit one!" squealed Sandy Potter.

Together the Smoots turned and fled pell-mell down the hill, around a point and out of sight.

"Watch 'em," warned Dad. "They'll bob up somewheres else and snipe us."

The two weary land hunters lay in the long grass, as it sang and hissed in the wind, lay for ten minutes and were rewarded with the sight of their two enemies galloping northward half a mile away. The father was supporting the son in the saddle with one arm.

"They're gone!" exclaimed Dad. "Well, maybe that shot will straighten out that young Smoot and make a man of him."

They watched the Smoots out of sight, each thinking his own thoughts in glum silence, then together they got up and started down toward the house together.

"You ain't shot me yet," said Dad.

Potter made no reply.

Down across the field a flock of crows arose, the setting sun on their wings. The two men stopped on the porch to watch, leaning their rifles against the logs.

The low sun, like the storied Midas, turned to gold everything that it touched. The men gazed, drinking in the glory.

"We still got to settle it," observed Potter.

The dogs were whimpering around hungrily.

"Shucks," said Dad contritely, "forgot to feed the dogs."

He went into the house and came back with a big square of warm bread.

"Tell you," said the sandy one brightening, "we might let the dogs settle. Throw up the bread and which ever dog gets it, his owner gets the homestead."

"Fair enough," allowed Dad, hopeless and stooped.

He held out the bread for the dogs to smell, to make them alert.

"If Twang gets the bread the land is yours," outlined Dad. "But if Spice gets it, the land is mine. That right?"

"You've said it. Throw the bread up between 'em and I'll abide by the verdict."

The dogs were squatting six feet apart, hungry, keen, watching every movement.

Dad drew his hand back to throw. The dogs half-rose, ready to leap. The old man tossed the morsel exactly between them.

Spice and Twang leaped and caught the bread in mid-air. Their teeth flashed whitely, clicked together. In the flitting second the two men saw each dog get half the bread.

"Half and half!" cried Potter.

"We both stay!" shouted Dad. "We'll divide the land."

They pumped at each other's hands, tears streaming down their hard old cheeks.

They broke away. To hide his joy Potter began to get the remainder of Dad's household effects into the house.

The dogs were leaping and wrestling in the throes of new friendship.

Dad went to the barn to unharness Hide and Seek. He hung the harness on a peg and came out feeling as chesty as a king. The golden land, the purple hills lay before him. The branches of the young orchard trees whipped and cracked together in the wind.

"Pretty soon now," thought Dad, "Sandy and me'll be plowing for corn."

The CAMP-FIRE
A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THIS is a very cheerful report from the C. Z. Here's to more of the same:

> San Francisco.
>
> I have just returned from the Canal Zone where every fifth man wore your Camp-Fire Button. Seems like I'm putting it a little strong, but it's the truth.—FRANK MANNING.

YOU'LL remember an earlier letter from our comrade Dean Ivan Lamb, an American formerly a lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps with several German planes to his credit, now a colonel of revolutionists in Brazil. When we went into the war he came home to offer his services to his own country.

I wish I could remember the details of his efforts to give his war-trained services to our then green aviation corps, who needed such services badly but wouldn't admit it. I remember one of my chief occupations for several months was keeping from writing a frank and highly impolite letter to some ignoramus whose shoulder-straps had gone to his fat head. The best he could do for Lamb was permission to become a mechanic of about Grade Z.

Either this officer or some other one to whom the pompous pride of his uniform and its contents was more important than the efficient service of his country was finally prevailed upon to take Lamb up for trial flight. Mind you, Lamb had his British credentials, German planes and all, but real experience at the front meant nothing to this inflated ass until *he* had passed on "this fellow's" ability as an airman. And mighty hard to get him to condescend to give the test. Well, he gave it—and couldn't get his "bus" back to earth. Lamb had to take the stick from him and make the landing.

Did that convince this old lady that Lamb might possibly learn to keep pace with him and his other untried beginners? I give you one guess. After trying for months, Lamb gave up the attempt.

I had a look-in on the details of another (American) R. F. C. airman's attempts to give his trained services to his own country. I believe he was finally allowed to operate a tank—but not overseas. I know only the hearsay of Tracy Richardson's attempts to break through red tape, empty pomposity, petty jealousy and utter inefficiency. Canada had a colonel's commission waiting for him and he'd earned the reputation of being the best machine-gunner in the Canadian Forces—was widely known as an expert in that line even before the war. Luckily he was finally able to force an examination and a real consideration of his case. That forced them to give him something like the position he deserved to fill.

But there are lots of stories like that. A pity we can't collect all those pompous inefficients and lower the census with them. It never seems to occur to that breed that they're really traitors to their country. Not full-witted traitors, but it doesn't require much intelligence to do damage as a traitor. Some Reserve officers, please take notice. Also some of other kinds. The breed doesn't seem to get the idea that, if a fellow really has something to swell up about, there generally isn't time—or need—to do the swelling up. About the only difference between a blown-up bladder and nothing is the point of a pin.

Well, anyhow, here's Lamb down in South America after quite a few adventures in C. A. And having quite his share of excitement:

Buenos Aires, September 16, 1923.

Many greetings and hello! The old bus limped into the city of Good Airs on the Silver Sea (four days ago), looking like something the cat brought in.

TRUSTING that you received my letter written from Don Pedrito (Rio Grande do Sul) I will continue the war from there. From Don Pedrito we marched southward toward the frontier of Uruguay where we received a large supply of ammunition. It had been raining and very cold for two weeks and our horses were in very bad condition, so we were forced to travel slowly with heavy loads of ammunition.

Our number was approximately two thousand, with a *cavalhada* of five thousand that were nothing but skin and bones. The second inst. we headed west (near the frontier) toward Santa Anna de Livrameinto, expecting to find little resistance. The morning of the third, after being in the saddle three hours, our advance picket reported the whole of the main force of the State directly in front, with reinforcements arriving.

We could not retreat because of the poor condition of the horses, so extended our line (open order) to the north from the international boundary line and formed contact with the enemy half an hour later. I was in the left center with the machine-gun and nineteen *carguieros*. The *carguieros* were all armed, so they dismounted, leaving their horses in an arroyo, and advanced on foot to the top of a rise about 1,000 yards in advance. At the first burst from the machine-gun the Chimangos halted and took cover and for an hour we held up their whole right wing (with their two MG's). Then I ran out of ammunition. It required twenty minutes to bring up the reserve supply, which arrived just as the whole Chimango line started to advance.

I HAD just finished the second disk when they pipped me through the right thigh and knocked me silly for an instant. In the meantime the Chimangos continued to advance while our whole line to the right and left were retiring. It was impossible for me to get to my horse in time to escape, even if I could mount, and as the Chimangos always knife prisoners, I continued firing.

My *carguieros* would not leave me and in a moment the enemy line split to right and left in bunches. Two disks ruined the lot to the left and they turned tail, leaving their dead and wounded. We then had their whole left wing (on our right) in enfilade and they commenced dropping like flies. Ten of my *carguieros* were busy loading disks (five were wounded) while the seven other live ones were pouring lead into the long enemy line—in another moment their line broke and then our line reformed, then advanced, then went hog-wild. The Chimangos took to the tall grass, abandoning all transport, battle-flags, ammunition-carts, entire *cavalhada*, one machine-gun (Madsen), sixty-eight saddled horses, 38 unwounded prisoners, 132 wounded, 96 dead, all their tents and food supplies, and about five hundred rifles. Then chased the remaining 1900 three leagues (Brazilian) (13 miles) into the hills. I could not join in the chase, so my servant helped me on my horse, and hustled around amongst the dead and wounded until he found a *cantina* full of a native booze with a kick like a mule.

AFTER three drinks I could sit on my horse without assistance and headed for an *estancia* that I could see across the border about six miles away and a mile over the line. At the line we were met by Uruguayan soldiers who would not let armed Revs. pass, so I sent my servant back with the machine-gun while I proceeded alone. When I reached the *estancia* the canteen was empty—but not I.

At the *estancia* I found twenty-three more wounded; no doctors, no bandages—just nothing. I was covered with blood, but managed to wash myself and found no bones broken, took possession of a bed, sent my clothes to be washed and waited two days for their return—but my underwear failed to return. Then I got a Ford to Rivera (just across from S. Anna). It was nearly a hundred miles over horrible roads and took all day, all night and most of the next day to make the trip and I was nearly frozen—nothing to eat and no dressings. All the doctors were too busy to attend to me, so I got bandages and at the end of two days I could hobble around a bit and I received orders to come here to purchase arms, aeroplane, etc.

No one took it into consideration that I had been wounded, because I did not lie in bed and groan for sympathy, so it was a bit tough. . . . Will return to B. A. in about two months.—Col. D. Ivan Lamb.

A WORD from Royce Brier concerning his story in this issue:

Everett, Washington.

I met *Tommy Oates* three years ago on the post-road north of Holbrook, and one of his cast-off tires is still to be seen between Indian Wells and Keams Cañon unless some Navajo boy is using it for a hoop. As for *Navatea*, he went to Throop Polytechnic in Pasadena, I believe, uses English with greater care than I do—and eats on the floor.—Royce Brier.

AS TO the first point made in the following letter from a comrade, I used "Englishman" instead of "Britisher" when having in mind the British Empire as a whole. Sorry. No harm intended. We Americans are rather prone to use the terms without distinction and as a matter of fact the word "British" seems to many of us at least as inapplicable to Canadians and most other Colonials as does the word "English."

As to the second point. I was mistaken in saying any one serving in the British Navy is supposed to swear the oath of allegiance to the Crown, though this is true of their Army.

As to the V. C. never having been awarded to any other than a Britisher I can only refer our comrade again to the "History of the Victoria Cross" formerly quoted to indicate the contrary rather clearly.

New York, N. Y.

Permit me as a reader of *Adventure* since its birth in 1910 to correct you in an article which appears in Camp-Fire for the issue of October 20, 1923, under the caption "The History of the V. C."

FIRST you make a grave error when you state that only "Englishmen are to have or can receive the V. C." a statement which will probably cause numerous Welsh, Scotch and Irishmen to resort to profane language, not speaking of the several Colonials who go to make up the British Empire. Second you contend that any one serving in the British Army or Navy is supposed to swear the oath of allegiance to the British crown and again you are wrong.

I am American born and of American stock on both sides for more than two hundred years, and in the late war I served from August 11, 1914, until March 19, 1919, as a chief gunner in the Royal Navy and I did not and I never have taken the oath of allegiance to the British Crown and neither was I asked to do so, for the very simple reason that one does not take the oath of allegiance upon enlistment in the Royal Navy.

But that is not the case in the Army. One does and must take the oath of allegiance when joining the colors of the British Army and, upon the ceremony being completed, the officer who swears you in presents you with a shilling.

Why this distinction is made between the Army and Navy is this: It is an iron-clad law, and except in dire cases of necessity never broken, that no one is allowed to join the Royal Navy who was not born under the Union Jack; while it lies solely in the discretion of the recruiting officer who gets into their Army, though if they know you to be a foreigner, they invariably tell you to go outside and come back and see if you can not be a "Canadian" or some other Colonial.

I HAVE never heard of the V. C. ever being awarded to other than a Britisher, and I hardly think that it has been done, owing to the fact the V. C. carries with it a life pension of fifty pounds sterling and the also ironclad law that no pensioner can retain his pension and reside under a foreign Flag, though that law may under some extenuating circumstances and upon approval of the Home Secretary be broken.

My knowledge of these facts comes from being for more than two years in an official capacity at the Admiralty, Whitehall, London, and the only known American to ever hold said position, with my papers and discharges to show all and sundry that I am not bluffing.

Hoping that you will accept this correction in the same spirit it is sent, that of good fellowship.—R. J. Sutton.

WHEN we come to history—written history—that makes King Tut seem modern, well, that *is* history:

Honolulu, T. H., Thursday, June 24, 1923.

All about Genghis Khan, *re* letter Mr. Lamb in a former issue.

By chance, while venturing in the Hawaiian Islands for material for yarns and picturing the reality of conditions in the Islands today, I met up with an authority on the very point Mr. Lamb makes. This man is an educated Korean, one —— —— (whose name please refrain from publishing. If you or Mr. Lamb wish to write him, address him care ———).

HE READ for me a translation of the ancient official record (preserved in Korea) showing the Emperor Kin, who ruled China prior to Genghis Khan, to have been originally of Korean stock. Freely translated, the title of the history is a "review of the history of the round world." This book is a written record of continuous history of Korean origin beginning, 2,323 B. C., or 4,356 years ago, Chinese time. Some book, what?

The Korean gentleman who brought the matter to my attention reads and speaks English, French, German, American, Korean, Chinese and Japanese. He has read the "Outline of History" and thinks Mr. Wells has not given adequate credit to Korea.

THE translation of the history tells of a Korean going from his home in the middle province by the sea, known today as Whanghai, to a place north of the Amur River. There he started a new tribe through his sons. This tribe's name is given as Wan An—the surname of the first Kin Emperor.

The book further tells of Genghis Khan and attributes (according to my Korean authority) the great success of Genghis Khan to an advisor (misnamed, by the way, in Mr. Well's "Outline.') This advisor Kin and Korean history claim was a man trained under the Kin dynasty and came from the Kin tribe. He was known as Prince, so must have come from the Kin tribe and race. Chinese royalty then was even more exclusive than anything Europe knew later.

I am working on a translation of the history, if I can sustain interest and patience. Korea is a mine which has never been worked adequately from the literary or historical point.

KOREANS are fiercely proud of their history, which is notable. It is interesting to note the history contains an almost identical legend similar to that of "Robin Hood."

I enclose exact copy of the story in the original Chinese characters taken from the page of the history and telling the tale of the founding of the Kin tribe. If you have a highly educated Chinese or Korean available there, you can make your own translation. It might also interest Mr. Lamb.

On enclosure No. 2 is my own free translation of three versions of the Kin tribe founding by the original ancestor from Korea. I think my probing Korean records with the aid of cultured Koreans will bring to light some highly interesting stuff.

Korea, of course, today hotly resents the Jap domination, and well may this be. The Koreans regard the Japanese as barbarians from a comparatively historical standpoint.

The Korean smiles tolerantly over our hysteria about finding King Tut, and well may he so, because the Korean is studying the *written* history of his own land and people dealing with times and events older than King Tut's tomb by a mere thousand years.—REED ROBINSON.

I SENT Mr. Robinson's letter to Harold Lamb and received the following reply. I'm sure he'll not mind my passing it on to you.

It was a great delight to read Robinson's letter, and I expect to communicate with the Korean scholar.

ALL that he says about the achievements of the early (although the Koreans themselves would term them "later") dynasties is true. By the way, you remember that the Manchus themselves are descended from the Nu-chens, a wild folk dwelling in the snow mountains just north of Korea.

(Nurachu came down from Manchuria in the middle of the seventeenth century and set up the Manchu dynasty which held the throne of China for three hundred years or so. Kang-hsi, his offspring, was one of the most famous monarchs of that great nation, and his reign in Asia eclipsed that of Louis XIV in Europe. And in every sense except vice, cruelty and satirical wit, Kang-hsi eclipsed the Grand Monarch.)

The story of the break between the Kitans (for which read loosely Northern Chinese) and the Nu-chens is quite interesting. Giles relates it as follows: The Kitan monarch some two generations before the time of Genghis Khan was somewhat the worse for wine on a fishing expedition in the Nu-chen territory. (A failing common to other races when angling, it would seem.) He ordered the young nobles of the Nu-chen, or Koreans, to get up and dance for him. One youth refused and remained sitting, and thereafter prudently left the scene with his family. If he had remained he would have been bowstringed, I suppose.

Anyway, this chap started a war against the Kitans that put his dynasty on the throne of China, as Robinson relates, before the arrival of Genghis Khan. The dynastic name of this clan was Kin, or Golden.

I'M SORRY now that I did not call *Mingan* what he really was—a Korean. I believe in "The Three Palladins" I mentioned that he was a Manchu, a prince from the north, of Liao-tung. All this was true, but he was a Korean as well. In that day, however, the national name was rarely—if ever—used; in the same way, in our country, say before the French and Indian war, our forefathers hardly called themselves Americans.

In case this question comes up in your mind—the Tatár (or as we spell it, Tatars) were sprung from the same ancestors as the elder Koreans—cousins, you might say. The Mongols, who ruled the Tartars from the time Genghis Khan, were second or third cousins.

BY THE way, in reading some Chinese annals after "The Three Palladins" was in print, I came across the following, which might interest Robinson or his friend:

"Yelu Ko-hay was a great mandarin of the Kin Emperors, who, being sent to settle some affairs with Chingkiz Khan, was so charmed with him that he entered into his service. He was a prince of the imperial family of Liao whose name was Yelu."

The passage went on to say how Chepe Noyon and Yelu Ko-hay led two divisions of the Mongol Horde. (This being a French translation of the Chinese annals, I'd wager that Yelu Ko-hay is the same as Yelui Ku-tsai, in another translation. Witness "Chingkiz Khan" as against Genghis Khan.) The letter "h" in Chinese can stand for several others—"K" or "ch" mostly.

THE said annals gave me quite a thrill, as they mentioned a general of the Mongols named Mingan. I had guessed at Yelui Ku-tsai's dynastic name and set it down as Mingan, because the first form would have been such hard reading for our American public. Also I had guessed at the Liao dynasty, and had made Mingan acquainted with Genghis Khan before their meeting in Pekin. And finally the annals relate that Chepe forced the Great Wall, as in the story.

Gives a man rather a creepy feeling to find imagination borne out by facts! Goes to show that fiction can sometimes be as strange as truth.—HAROLD LAMB.

FOLLOWING our new custom, Arthur Schwieder, who did the illustrations for this issue, stands up and introduces himself to Camp-Fire:

New York City.

Will I join your Camp-Fire? Well! I've been sitting all by my lone fire, and now and then over from your gathering would drift the delicious odor of the sizzling bacon that some member of your Camp had brought in. Gee! but it was tantalizing, and I am delighted with the invitation to throw my meager efforts in the simmering pot, so I am on my feet to introduce myself.

I was born in Missouri on the highest point of the Ozark Mountains, and by slow degrees I journeyed down to the sea, doing everything, as an artist generally does, except waiting on table, and how I ever missed being a waiter is a mystery, as I have often been very, very hungry.

At the age of nine, my father and I followed the rush for gold in Colorado, and I have been rushing for gold ever since, but up to the present have not made a strike.

My first attempt as an artist was the day after my father had bought me a paint-box, and I was left at home alone. After removing all the clothes from the closets, I proceeded to paint all the clothes-hooks, and of course some one hung up the clothes that evening. It is needless to say that I took my meals standing up for several days afterward.

Then I ran away to become a regular artist where I could swing the paint-brush without disastrous results, and then the fun began—that is, it is fun now as I look back, but at the time each catastrophe was a serious affair.

During the panic of 1907, when hundreds of thousands of men were out of work, and thousands slept on concrete pavements huddled close together for warmth with newspapers as a covering to keep the driving snow off, I became very proficient in the art of eating everything on a free lunch counter without attracting the eye of the long mustached fellow behind, and, as I did not have the necessary nickel, this was a difficult feat.

I worked several years on a Chicago newspaper when newspaper artists got around a bit, and often ran into adventure and sometimes tragedy on the city streets.

Now that I am down to the sea, I edge back to the woods and mountains every chance I get. "It was ever thus."

As there are a great number around this Fire who can tell more interesting stories, I resign my standing spot to the next in the Circle.—ARTHUR SCHWIEDER.

A LETTER from comrade Jay Lewis of Norfolk, Virginia, says we let one of our writers' brigade get away with muffling an oar with half a jacket around the blade. I'll bet we did. Not that we didn't know that it isn't the blade of an oar that is muffled, but just because we always have made and always will make a certain number of slips, as well as a certain number of mistakes from ignorance.

Those of you who have yourselves read fiction proof for a printer will understand and need no explanation or apology. Most of the rest of you realize that in even one short story there are chances for literally thousands of slips and that the poor author and editor do pretty well to get by even as well as they do. You know, too, that we know the best way to keep the number of mistakes down to a minimum is to "call" us every time we make one, and that we welcome this kind of cooperation every time it's done in a friendly way. Mr. Lewis did it that way and we accept his correction with thanks and without even looking up the case to make sure we did make that mistake.

But now and then the finder of a mistake (real or fancied) sneers and jeers and calls us hard names—sort of wallows in the chance to show his own superiority.

HERE'S what happens to our stories and poems before you see them in print. Some of them were accepted after being read by only one of us; some read by two, three or even four, five, six or seven of us. According to the particular needs and circumstances in each case. As each one reads, he makes a written note of every inconsistency, mistake or doubtful point that he finds. In the case of a long story one man may cover several pages with finely written notes and queries. Some stories go through without any from anybody. Such cases are the exception. These notes and queries are sent to the author, who either shows that no change is necessary or makes the changes, from the page numbers given, on a carbon copy of his manuscript, or indicates them to us by page number.

Then one of us "edits the copy" for the printer, seeing that these changes are properly embodied, making all typographical changes, conforming spelling to the Standard Dictionary, which we "follow for style," and keeping his eye out for any mistakes the author and the rest of us have not caught.

When it's set in type a proof-reader in the composing-room proof-reads it, with an eye out for mistakes still uncaught. Then it comes back to us in "galleys" (single column strips some two feet long) and another of us reads it.

Then it "goes up" and is made into page-proofs. Then we go over it again. And, in less detail, over later page-proofs.

That sounds very thorough. It would be if catching mistakes in stories were as easy as some readers think. It is not thorough, but it's as thorough as time permits. Try handling 372,000 words of fiction per month (not to mention the poems, short prose items and all the departments) and see how much time it takes. It's more than the equivalent of six fair-sized books per month, seventy-two books per year.

And it doesn't eliminate all the mistakes. Wouldn't if we went over it twice as many times, for we in the office don't know everything. But the point I'm driving at is that it does eliminate many mistakes and that those not caught are by comparison very, very inconsiderable in number.

IT IS even possible we catch some mistakes that our sneering critics wouldn't know enough to recognize as mistakes, and it's pretty sure that they themselves would have made a few mistakes if they'd had the handling of those 372,000 words plus per month. If any of them can prove he wouldn't, there's a regular job waiting for him in this office. And in every other editorial office. Welcome, stranger. We've never met any one like you before. A man who knows not only all the technicalities of type work but also has the entire English language and its usage mastered absolutely down to the last little detail and who, on top of all that, knows intimately all the technicalities of the sea, war, ranching, and all the other trades, businesses and professions, all the customs, history, languages and everything else of all the peoples of the world, all the local color, to the last detail, past and present, of every out-of-the-way corner of the whole world—well, we cheerfully kneel before him and beat our foreheads on the ground. For we don't know all those things, not by an awful lot.

But it doesn't follow, as some of these critics evidently think, that we're half-witted.

And the game as they play it doesn't seem a fair one. We have to display 372,000 words of our handling every month and let them root for mistakes in them. But we never have a chance to root for mistakes in anything of theirs. Except, of course, the very letters in which they jeer at us. I feel that we ought to have an even break.

IN MANY cases it would be easy to take their own letters and rip those letters to bits for their mistakes in handling words as well as for their lack of ordinary courtesy. But that would be a cheap and small performance, even though it would be only giving them a dose of their own medicine.

So I propose this:

When some fellow, instead of earning our gratitude by pointing out some of our mistakes in a matter of fact or friendly manner, bawls us out as idiots, he must establish his claim to superiority by sending us a story of his own for *us* to criticize and must make it so good we can't find any flaws in it. To be fair, it ought to be about some place he doesn't know at first hand. To be perfectly fair he ought to submit 372,000 words about all kinds of things and places and give us a month to work on it. But we'll make it childishly easy for him by asking for only one story and let him lay the scene where he likes. Or, if he objects to the fiction part of it and will come into the office, we'll give him one of the stories for a future issue and let him fix it all up so the rest of you, and we, can't find any mistakes at all in it. We'll gladly pay him for his time.

Come and get it. All we ask is a fair deal.

And now for Mr. Lewis, who is not that kind. His letter was so interesting that we asked him to give us still more about muffled oars and let us pass it on to Camp-Fire in general. He was good enough to do so:

> Norfolk, Virginia
>
> In all adventure there are no two words more exciting than these: "Muffled oars." What scenes they conjure up! The still lagoon; the long, low, rakish schooner in the shadow of the land; the warship that had been sighted against the sky at sundown and which might have gone by unseeing and yet might have seen the lurking slaver or the stealthy pirate now at bay in his lair; the attack by boats, their silent approach with *muffled oars*.
>
> OR MAYBE it was an escape from the pirate, slipping away in the dark—with muffled oars. Or entering a harbor at night to silence a battery, while the gallant frigate waited in the offing, with never a noise to disturb the sleepy sentinels, for we pulled with muffled oars.
>
> Oh, these times were years and years ago, but they thrill us even yet. For we took part in them ourselves. We were ever aboard the boats that pulled with muffled oars, or innocently aboard the

wicked slaver or the dastardly pirate. We pulled ashore with the smugglers—with muffled oars and once aboard the lugger we waited, listening breathlessly to the silent approach of the boats, creeping through the dark with muffled oars.

No sea adventure, no story of the sea, whether written by the wonderful Cupples of "The Green Hand," or Marryat, or Michael Scott, or even Ballantyne the brave or Cooper of the wood and wave, is complete without a boat or boats, with muffled oars. And if there is no mention of muffled oars in that stirring tale of Stevenson himself, "Treasure Island," then the lugger in the cove was brought there most lubberly by the master-spinner of yarns afloat and ashore. But even Homer and Shakespeare nodded.

> "Then he said 'Good night' and with muffled oar
> Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore."

Paul Revere's ride was not complete without the muffled oars of mystery and adventure.

BUT even Frederick Marryat fails to go into details about how oars are muffled and Capt. Marryat, author of "Peter Simple," "Mr. Midshipman Easy" and that masterpiece "Snarleyow," not to mention "The Flying Dutchman," is one of the most painstaking of sea realists who can tell a tale that not only a landsman but a seaman will love.

Says he, in "Peter Simple," in describing a frigate's boats with their two crews of ordinary seamen and their fighting crew: "The oars of the boats were fitted with grummets upon iron thole-pins, that they might make little noise and might swing fore and aft without falling overboard when the boats pulled alongside."

And again: "The fighting boats' crews, without orders, were busy with their boats, some cutting up old blankets to muffle the oars, others making new grummets."

And if you do not know what a grummet is, look it up in the nearest dictionary and you will find: "Grummet—see grommet." And after much painstaking research you will find that a grommet is one, or two and perhaps three turns of a rope around the loom, or shaft, of an oar, where it fits into the rowlock, and spliced, or grafted, to grip the oar tight and fastened to a thole-pin. Probably by a loop slipped over the top of the pin.

AND if that isn't as plain as the sea in a calm, then all that need be said is this: When oars are muffled it is at the rowlocks, or oarlocks, and not at the blades, as many a lubber is prone to think. For your expert oarsman can dip an oar in and out of the sea with no more noise than one of Hugh Pendexter's noble redmen in paddling a birch. But when he *pulls*, the oar thumps against the thole-pins and this sound, traveling across the smooth water, can be heard afar on a calm night. Or even on a rough night, down the wind.

So, to prevent the thump of the oars against the thole-pins, the sailor muffles his oars by padding the oar handles with anything that will deaden the sound. They cut up old blankets aboard Marryat's bold British brig, the *Rattlesnake*, Captain Terence O'Brien, and wrapped the handles of the oars with these bandages. And then they probably fixed a grummet to each oar, slipped the loop of the grummet over the rear thole-pin, probably, so that they need not stop to ship oars when they got alongside their prey. They just let the oars drop and the grummets kept them from drifting away.

You see, in those old days they did not use swivel oarlocks of the modern patent kind. They either used a slot in the gunwale, big enough to contain the oar, or thole-pins, which are pins or large pegs stuck in holes bored in the gunwale; or they used a metal u-shaped top, with a shank. The shank sank into a hole in the gunwale and the oar rested in the u-shaped metal container. And every time they muffled the oars they had to bandage them—pad them—to keep them from thumping in their pockets, whether the socket was a slot in the gunwale, or thole-pins, or the u-shaped oar-container with its shank.

AND if that is not yet plain, hearken, then, to the Century Dictionary:

"Muffled oars: oars having mats or canvas put around their looms when rowing to prevent them from making a noise against the tholes or in the rowlocks."

And the loom of an oar means the shaft of an oar, and tholes is the Century Dictionary way of saying thole-pins. And thole is a word, they say, taken from a Norwegian word, "toll," which is said to mean fir, or pine. Probably the Norse sailors made their thole-pins of fir or pine wood.

You never can tell.—JAY LEWIS.

REMARKS about failure to enclose postage when asking favors of people seem to have borne fruit in at least Mr. Pendexter's case. Fine, and don't let it worry any one. It will be some time before arrears are made up.

Norway, Maine.

What did you write in Camp-Fire about "return postage?" I didn't see that number. I've hunted and hunted through my files. But I've been deluged by postage from all over the Union. Writers speak of remissness being remarked in "Camp-Fire." One good friend, whom I do not want to send stamps, sent me a whole book. If it keeps up, I shall quit writing stories and make my living from "inclosed postage."

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs that Men Have Sung."

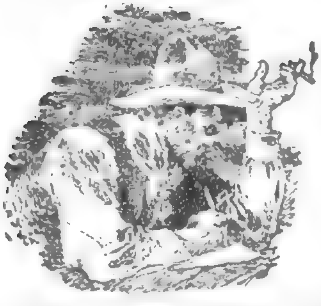
Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey and Asia Minor
27—29. Balkans. In Three Parts
30. Scandinavia
31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
32. Great Britian
33—35. South America. In Three Parts
36. Central America
37, 38. Mexico. In Two Parts
39—45. Canada. In Seven Parts
46. Alaska
47. Baffinland and Greenland
48—53. Western U. S. In Six Parts
54—57. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
58—63. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Tropical Forestry
Aviation
Army Matters, United States and Foreign
American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
Standing Information

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

Monroe, Wash.

You sure get me up a tree with a request of this sort because there is so much which truthfully told would sound so —— egotistic that I do not feel like taking the risk of being misjudged. On the other hand there are several little things which I hate to admit even to myself.

I believe it would be a good idea just to give you a little outline of this in a personal letter and let you publish what your judgment deems proper. My deep loyalty to *Adventure* and also to my "A. A." folks, is the only reason I have for complying with this request, for I feel that you fellows in the office know what you want better than I. Taking it on this basis, I might "orate as following," to quote our friend Tuttle.

I am a shade over six feet tall and weigh between 185 and 190. Have about a million dollars' worth of health and energy, sleep six hours out of the twenty-four and keep moving most of the other eighteen. My age is just twelve years older than I look, and I sometimes think I am a human contradiction or else, as a sub-title writer expressed it, "the football of fate."

What I mean is this: I am a peace-loving man who is eternally getting mixed up in some sort of scrap, fistic, political or otherwise. It is nothing more or less than Fate.

For example, a little while ago while working for a paper in a small town elsewhere, a human rodent came over and informed my partner that I was everything disreputable. Knowing that it was a lie, the partner aforesaid just laughed about it and then told me as a joke. Of course it was all right for him to take it that way; but I had to do something, so I took the offender by the neck and booted him out of town.

Now, some people who did not understand the circumstances thought I was a man of violence with a quarrelsome disposition; but the fact was that the town was too small to hold us both, and I was in a position where I could not possibly leave for a few weeks. I quote this as a sample of what Fate is continually handing me.

At the beginning of my career I left my happy home in Ontario and went to what was then the far West, but still east of the Rockies. I wanted to get into the cattle-baron business *via* the faithful-puncher route. What happened? Just in time to get into what was known as the Sheep-Herders' War, which I sometimes think was staged solely for my benefit.

Result, a gun-fight—forced on me just because I was too scared to run—a hurried change of address without telling the postmaster where to send my mail. I also changed my name and occupation, for I was frightened foolish. Seven years after, I learned that there was a medal coming to me instead of a jail sentence of a few dozen years.

So it has gone ever since. I have seen Cape Nome, Alaska and Cape Town, South Africa. Worn several sorts of military uniforms and various other costumes. Saw service in the American-Spanish War in '98 and again was in South Africa in 1900. Have prowled around the northern country from the Great Slave Lake to the mouth of the Yukon, taking in quite a number of the "way points," as the railway schedules say. Have been comparatively rich three times and absolutely broke one hundred and thirty-seven times oftener. Figure that out, you mathematical sharps.

In my personal tastes I am passionately fond of flowers, babies and music. Have always had a yearning for a home but never had a real one, a furnished room with my harp and my typewriter being as close as I am to it tonight. I would like to have a garden but have to content myself with admiring the gardens of others. I want a dog but have no place to keep it. I would like a job where I could be home three times a day, and have been holding down some sort of a traveling job ever since I came from the north seven or eight years ago.

I want to be friends with every one, for I am really of a wonderfully cheerful disposition, and yet I had not been in this country a year before a fellow put me under bonds to keep the peace, urging that he was in fear of another beating-up. The funny part of it was that he was a local prize-fighter.

I am an unmarried man of an affectionate disposition who could be almighty good to a good woman, and yet I have not even a "steady." (Easy now, ladies; one at a time, as all communications will be treated with every respect and confidence.)

Now as one man to another, what in —— can you write of a mixup like that? If my life had been a big success I would have been proud to tell all and sundry about it so that by example they could profit. Success and I have absolutely nothing in common.

Nor am I ready to admit failure for two reasons. One is that I have a few million dollars' worth of friends of the real kind while my enemies are all in the polecat class. Again, no man can say that his life is going to be a failure until that life is done. Mine, I hope, is far from the end; for I find this is a great old world, and I sure get a whale of a kick out of living.

Located as I am in the very best country on earth and possessing an apparently limitless supply of health and strength together with a keen sense of humor, every day is just like a holiday. While this lasts I would be willing to live a hundred years even though I firmly believe that "Over the Divide" is a country waiting for all square shooters that has got this one faded. So I cheerfully say:

"Let Fate play football with me if she so desires. There's a heap of interest in seeing where you are going to light."—Ed. L. Carson.

Albuquerque, N. M.

Born in Illinois in 1865. Began my engineering work as rodman in railway work in 1886. Not a university man. Self-educated. Went to Arizona in 1887, began irrigation engineering and have followed it ever since. Was irrigation engineer for some of the biggest irrigation works in Arizona, in the Salt River Valley and elsewhere in the early days. Manager of Phoenix City water-works for two years. Built ditto for Tempe, Arizona. City engineer of Phoenix two years.

In National Guard of Arizona for fourteen years from high private to brigadier-general. Adjutant-general Arizona during Spanish-American war.

In private practise as Civil and Irrigation Engineer up to 1904, when I entered the Government service in that capacity, and with the exception of seven months in Montana, seven months in California and about a year at various points in the West have been in New Mexico. Am now Supervising Engineer in the United States Indian Irrigation Service, which is a small Reclamation Service for the Indian Reservations only, and have charge of the Fifth Irrigation District, comprising Colorado, New Mexico, Northern Arizona and a small part of Utah. Headquarters in Albuquerque.

Am Secretary of the Kiwanis Club in Albuquerque. Mason: Albuquerque Lodge No. 60 and Azatlan Chapter, Rose Croix, Santa Fé. Member Sons of the American Revolution, and am the only one I know who has been President of *two* State branches, having been twice President of Arizona and once of New Mexico.

Member American Society Civil Engineers. Member American Association Engineers and director Southwestern District. Member New Mexico Archeological Society and several other similar societies.

As to my knowledge of New Mexico and most of Arizona. Have had charge of the work outlined above for many years. I travel some 25,000 miles each year, much of it by auto and other modes of conveyance other than trains; have the name of knowing all of that part of the two States included in the Indian Reservations and much of the balance.

Know enough of the Indians and Indian folklore that I have given several lectures each year for the past three years at the University of N. M., one on the Hopi Indians and the Snake Dance—which by the way I have seen some fourteen times, and been in the *kive* during some of the secret rites.

Guess I can give fairly accurate information regarding most of this section, and if I don't know it offhand I know where to get at it.—H. F. Robinson.

Chicago, Ill.

Here goes for the autobiography—though I despise them, they sound so egotistical.

Born in Manchester some forty-eight (still saying) Summers ago.

Went to Canada as a mere youth—worked on a farm—assisted in building the Canadian Northern Railroad in the northern wilds. Worked in a lumber camp one Winter getting thoroughly acquainted with the Lady of the Snows. Later with the Canadian Pacific Railway at Winnipeg and Vancouver, where I struggled with railroad statistics until I became a pretty good judge of figures—though would not qualify as assistant to Flo Zeigfeld. From Vancouver office window used to look longingly toward the Far East and had a sneaking ambition to travel westward to the East.

To San Francisco in 1904 and with the Pacific Mail S. S. Co. Was in San Francisco during the earthquake and fire of 1906, leaving two weeks later for Hongkong on a special mission.

Was in Hongkong for seven years, traveling to India and Ceylon and such way-ports as Indo-China, Siam, Straits Settlement, Java, Burma, etc., as General Agent of the Pacific Mail Steamship Co. Combed south China pretty extensively and acquired a working knowledge of the "ways that are dark" in Canton and other cities. Traveled muchly in the Philippines, and was Director of Publicity for the Islands in Hongkong and south China.

Left the Pacific Mail to join the Toyo Kisen Kaisha, but the advent of the Great War in 1914 rendered my job vacant before it was filled as I was to go to Europe as General European Agent.

Next was offered—and accepted—position as Agent for the Hawaii Promotion Committee—now Hawaii Tourist Bureau—and traveled throughout the United States, lecturing and promoting travel to Hawaii. Was later promoted to position of Secretary at Honolulu and rambled extensively throughout the Islands. Came to the Windy City to engage in steamship business, but, not having sufficient capital, had to relinquish this for the lecture platform.

Nothing very thrilling and do not think of any interest to your readers—but that's my story and I'll stick to it.—Fred J. Halton.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Durango

WHERE silver once was used for paving-bricks:

Question:—"Can you tell me something about the town or city of Durango, in the State of the same name, such as population, elevation, industries and so forth? I enclose stamped, addressed envelop for reply."—Edwin A. Georges, Milan, Kan.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—Durango may be called the Iron City of Mexico, as near the city is located the largest deposit of iron ever found in Mexico. The iron mountain is just north of the railroad station and just one-half mile away. It contains millions of tons of ore running from 75 to 90 per cent. pure iron. It is called the Cerro Mercado in honor of a cavalier of Cortez' army who came here to investigate reports of a mountain of pure silver, which turned out to be iron instead.

Durango is a city spread out over a plain with its streets for the most part running at right angles, with low but substantial buildings on both sides, with patios filled with flowers and gardens. Here and there are pretty plazas and *plazuelas*, with other fountains and green trees galore.

The Plaza Mayor is surrounded on its four sides with fine buildings of three and four stories, the State House being one of them; the others are houses and shops. In the middle of the plaza is the ever present band-stand. The walks are paved and hedged about with flowering shrubs and trees, also roses and lilies. In this plaza the people congregate for band concerts, to promenade, to see and to be seen. Near the northwest corner of the Plaza Mayor is a pretty little *plazuela* that is the courtyard of a church and ancient convent.

Two or three squares west are the Alameda and the *paseo* with their big trees and a picturesque little bridge crossing a small river. At the end of the *paseo* toward the north is the public *lavanderia* or wash-house, where the Mexican women may be seen at all hours of the day washing clothes. Two squares east of the Plaza Mayor is the *parian* or market-place, and around this part of the city are most of the stores.

Three hundred and fifty years ago the place where the city now stands was a ranch, and the corners of the streets Principal and Teresas was a large tree under which an altar was built and the first masses said. Afterward a little church was built at the corner of the streets Constitution and Mayor; this has been rebuilt, but many of the original timbers remain.

The *ranchero* who owned the land on which the city is built gave away many lots to settlers who would remain and defend the city against the Indians. Later a mine was discovered on his land, he became wealthy, and a percentage of the output was levied toward building the cathedral. Afterward he built the house now used as the governor's palace and a theater, both of stone, the theater being the second one built in Mexico.

He sent to the King of Spain a present of $2,000,000, asking permission to build galleries and portals of silver around his house. This was refused as being a privilege pertaining only to royalty. He then put up porches of wood; but on the occasion of a christening in his family he paved the street from his house to the church with bricks of silver. The descendants of this man live in Durango to this day; but they do not use silver as paving-blocks.

The cathedral was commenced in the year 1695 by Bishop Garcia de Legaspi, and the first public service was held in 1715, at which time were completed the thirteen arches and one tower. The second tower and the other annexes to the building were completed in 1844 under the direction of Señor Zubiria.

The entire work is of the Tuscan order of architecture. In the crypt are deposited the remains of eleven of the twenty-four bishops of Durango. During the latter part of the 17th century a terrible fire destroyed the archives and antiquities, and the political revolts from 1854 to 1860 finished all the books and modern documents.

The church of San Francisco is the oldest of all the churches in Durango, the foundations having been laid in 1556; and in that year was established the first Spanish settlement under Fray Diego de la Cadena. This first temple was solemnly blessed in 1563 on the reception of the mandates of the Viceroy, Don Luis de Velasco, at the hands of Captain Alonso Pacheco.

The church of San Augustin was founded in 1626 by the first Bishop of Durango, Fray Gonzalo de Hermosillo, a *religioso* of the order of San Augustin. In this church is a very notable image of Jesus the Nazarene, that was brought from Spain in 1673, to which tradition attributed an infinity of miracles.

Santa Ana is a very modern foundation for Mexico; it was commenced in 1777 and completed during the episcopacy of Don Francisco Javier Olivares in 1809.

El Colegio was erected by the Jesuits in 1684 as a part of the college they directed until 1720, the same year that a seminary was founded in the same building. This church opened to the public in 1776, when the Parroquia was transferred here from the Cathedral.

El Santuario de Guadalupe was built in 1714 by the twelfth Bishop of Durango, Don Pedro Tapiz; the interior was renewed in 1885. Analco, one of the primitive churches, was founded by the first Spanish settlers in 1560 in the only place inhabited by the Indians who lived in this valley. The ruins of this church were reconstructed in 1862 by Don Geronimo Silva. San Juan de Dios was founded as a hospital in 1770.

On a high hill overlooking the city and which may be seen for miles before arriving at the city is the old church of Los Remedios, a very ancient foundation, said by many to antedate the cathedral. Every pilgrim who will visit this church on the eighth of September of each year subtracts seven years from his stay in purgatory, according to local beliefs.

There is nothing new under the sun in Durango except the fairly modern railroad depot and the railway. The station is a very pretty building surrounded by green lawns, and seems a part of another country transplanted here. At the present time the city has about 50,000 people. It is 96 miles from Torreon, by which it is reached by rail. It is 680 miles from Mexico City by the direct Durango-Canitas line of railway. It is 550 miles from Piedras Negras, the nearest border town, and is 158 miles northwest of Zacatecas. The altitude is 6,207 feet above sea level.

The principal products are gold, silver, lead, copper, quicksilver, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, wheat, cotton, beans, chillis, resin, turpentine, tobacco and lumber. Principal industries are stock-raising, mining, cotton mills, foundry, lumber-milling and box factories. Not far from Durango are large stands of pine, and a large American lumbering company has several large mills near by. Two railroad lines lead north and west, one to Llano Grande which will finally be built to Mazatlan, and one to Tepehaunes.

The banks are the Banco de Durango and Banco Nacional de Mexico (branch). Hotels are the Paris, San Carlos, Roma, Cosmopolita and Durango.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Seining for Bonito and Kingfish

'TWILL be an interesting experiment:

Question:—"I want to find out all I can about seine-net fishing, and as I know the Pacific coast is practically the home of it you no doubt can, if you will be kind enough, tell me all I require to know.

My business here is planting, trading and fishing for pearl-shell and trepang; but lately I have discovered that there is quite a good market for dried fish, and so am going to give them a try.

I know a good deal about gill-netting and trawling, but I am pretty sure that the seine is better than either of these for the conditions here; in fact the trawl (otter) would be practically useless, owing to the corally bottom on the one hand, and great depth on the other. I have ordered a seine from England, as they are so much cheaper there than in the States; it is to be 200 fathoms by 200 mesh, or about 5 fathoms deep.

I remember when I was on the Pacific coast that the Japs used to fish a seine with those small Columbia River boats, but what the size of the net was or how they operated it with one boat, I never took the trouble to find out; and that is just what I now want to get at. My own idea was to anchor the dingey with one end of several hundred yards of rope made fast to it, then, with the net and rope on board, to steam away from the dingey across the tide or current in the motor-boat, paying out the rope and subsequently the net. After the net there would be several hundred yards more rope, and this would be paid out back to the dingey, where one would pick up the other end and then proceed to haul in the net. I don't know how this would answer, but I can not afford to devote two motor-boats to the job—at any rate not at first.

Perhaps you know of some book, published in the States, that would give a man particulars as to how to work a small purse-seine. I am afraid that to deal with it properly would entail rather a longer letter than you would care to bother with.

I think the way I suggest would work all right in many cases—I would of course have several natives, crew, on the motor-boat—but I am doubtful if it would be sufficiently speedy to cope with the large schools of bonito and kingfish that frequent these waters. These schools are nearly always on or close to the surface, and are generally visible at quite a distance, but at the same time they are usually moving at an appreciable pace and in no definite direction; both the pace and the direction depend entirely on the shoal of small fish that the large ones are pursuing. These schools, too, are generally in deepish water, but that would make no difference to the seine. The difficulty is to get the net around them with one power boat only. Of course with two power boats it would be quite easy.

While I am at it, I may as well ask one more question, but I am afraid you may not be able to help me. Through not having the gear to do so, I have missed several easy opportunities of getting a whale close round my station, and in consequence I have been thinking of importing some gear to have handy in case any more whales happen along. There are not, of course, enough to make it worth while to look for them.

Years ago I had a friend who used to go in for whaling up around Greenland, and I remember, after wintering one year in St. Johns, he there got hold of what I believe he called "bomb lances." They consisted of an octagonal lump of pitch-pine, about 4″ 6′ or 5′ long, and tapering from about 4′ in diameter at the butt to about 2′ at the top end. At this top end there was a sort of shell-case, with a fairly sharp nose, something like an eighteen-pounder shell. This contained the explosive. On one side of this shell-case affair an ordinary harpoon with line attached was fixed; and on the other side there was a small steel rod, projecting parallel and the same distance as the point of the harpoon.

This rather formidable affair was thrown by hand, the heavy pitch-pine haft giving the penetrating power. The harpoon was of course to hold the whale, and the small rod, on coming in contact with the hide, met with sufficient resistance, before penetrating, to set off a detonator, which in turn acted on the explosive in the shell, by the time the whole affair had well entered the whale's head.

I know that these weapons are now out of date, and that the gun only is used nowadays, but it occurred to me that the firm who used to make these old bomb-lances might still have some.

I don't, of course, know if this description will convey anything to you, as it is 15 or 20 years since I saw these things, and I have forgotten the details. Perhaps, however, you may know where I could get some sort of explosive apparatus that I could use by hand. It is not worth the expense of getting the modern gun.

By the way, are there any firms in the States who buy shark hide? I am told it is of value but so far have not discovered any one who is interested in it. The fins, tail and oil I have a good market for. Having already taken up too much of your time, I had better ring off. I enclose a 3d. piece by way of postage, as I can not get 'Reply Coupons' here. Please excuse this very lengthy inquiry."—T. P. ALEXANDER, Rabaul, New Britain, N. W. Pacific Islands.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—I think it is somewhat of a problem whether you could catch bonito or barracuda in a seine. However, you never can tell till you try. You can handle it all right in the manner you suggest. It is the system in use by all of the seiners in these waters, especially those after salmon. But the salmon, heading for their spawning-grounds, keep their regular fixed course and are not diverted from it.

A school of bonito, swift as they are and chasing small fish, are decidedly erratic in their movements. Whether you could work fast enough to enclose them in a seine you can learn only by experience, of course.

Again, on alarm, they might dive under the net before it was hauled. On the other hand, when intent on the chase and kill, they would not be apt to take alarm so easily.

I don't know of a book published on working seines. I have seen lots of it, and it does not seem to me any very intricate thing, but very decidedly good hard work and lots of it. Setting a seine time after time and getting a water haul, as with the best of luck sometimes happens, does not appeal to me personally as a form of idle amusement.

I have never heard of the kind of bomb lance you speak of. I have seen them shot from a gun small enough to be handled from the shoulder, though I am told that the recoil generally knocks the gunner down. The modern whaler on this coast is a craft of about 100 tons, carries a swivel 3-inch gun mounted forward, and this throws the bomb lance. It is certain and deadly. The fighting sperm whale is not a good thing to tackle in a small motor-boat with a black crew without such a weapon.

There is a firm in Everett, Wash.—I think it is called the Sea Products Co.—now engaged in tanning sharkskins of local catch, and is making a market for their hides. I was under the impression that this was also an industry established in Sydney. I do not think, however, the Everett firm buys sharkskins except those caught locally. It is the only concern of the kind I know of in the United States, and it operates as yet in a small way.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose* full *return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Homestead Lands of British Columbia

MR. CARSON prefers the State of Washington; and he started his career by being a Canadian, too:

Question:—"Will you send information referring to those parts of British Columbia where lands are the cheapest and good homestead lands are available, and where the climate is not severe in the Winter? Also information about minerals and timber lands.

Do you think that the opportunities for making a home and small investments are any better in British Columbia than in Washington or Oregon? What do you think of the sections around Bella Coola, Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte

Islands? Enclosed find stamped, addressed envelop. Please do not print my name or address."

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I am sending you a booklet that describes the homestead lands of B. C. which also gives you a synopsis of the land laws and other information. You will also receive a booklet telling you of the Government lands for purchase in that province, as I am having one sent you.

With regard to the forest and mineral resources of the province, you had better write Deputy Minister of Lands, Victoria, B. C., asking for a copy of Bulletin No. 23, which gives you full and general information along these lines.

Bella Coola is pretty well settled up so far as homesteads lands are concerned. It is a good location and fairly good climate.

The Queen Charlottes are too far from any market to be a good bet in the homesteading game and will probably continue to be so until the better sections are taken up, which will be in about ten years.

Vancouver Island is a beautiful place, swell scenery, good hunting and fishing, fertile soil and a fine climate, especially along the eastern coast. There are several small tracts open to homesteaders and considerable land for sale. A letter to Victoria and Island Development Assn., Victoria, B. C., will bring you full information. I believe Vancouver Island is the choice of the province for the man who wishes to make himself a home and has the capital with which to start. Among other advantages it is a wonderful fruit and poultry country with good markets for everything produced.

As to a place for making a home and getting the advantage of small investments, that is getting on dangerous ground. I know that this particular section of Washington looks almighty good to me, and I am satisfied that there is nothing in Oregon to surpass it. Skagit County is one of the most fertile spots in the world, as the agricultural reports amply prove. La Connor Flats, the farming district surrounding the little town of La Connor, are said to be second only to the Nile Valley.

I know very little of the opportunities for investment in B. C. beyond the fact that there is a lot of British money to be had over there on very easy terms. Of course there are always chances in a new country, but if B. C. has anything to beat Skagit County she will have to GO SOME.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Where Butter Grows on Trees

AND if you don't want to eat it you can use it for kerosene:

Question:—"From that part of Africa which you cover have any of the indigenous flora or fauna been domesticated?

Are there, in your opinion, any other of the flora or fauna which have possibilities for commercial development?

Can you give me a list of the vegetable and animal products produced there?

Can you refer me to any other source of information on the above?"—G. D. PERKINS, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Simpson:—Your questions, as you have put them, are a trifle too general to be answered separately, so I shall try to give you a blanket answer to all of them.

Offhand I should say that most of the flora of West Africa that has any kind of commercial value is under more or less carefully supervised cultivation *somewhere* along the coast, which, as far as my territory is concerned, extends roughly from Sierra Leone to Old Calabar. In some parts, even where agriculture is a possibility, the native is too lazy or too far behind the times to take advantage of his opportunities; while in the more advanced sections he cultivates everything in sight, including the white man's bad habits.

The kola nut, for instance, which is West Africa's substitute for the betel nut, is in a high state of cultivation on the Gold Coast, is one of the colony's principal exports and is sold by the far-wandering Hausa trader all over northern Nigeria and the west Sudan. The oil-palm, on the other hand, which grows wild from Conakry to Calabar and beyond, and has as yet shown no really great need for cultivation or conservation except in certain districts of Nigeria, is a property much prized by the native, who is all alive to the boundless blessing of this wealth that grows in such abundance over his head. These—the kola nut and the palm nut—are probably the extremes of cultivation and non-cultivation.

And in between we find Indian corn, yams, plantains, cocoa, cotton and indigo, peas, peppers, cassava, tomatoes, onions, ground nuts (peanuts), Guinea corn, Guinea grains, rice, wheat, sweet potatoes and smaller quantities of coffee and tobacco. Of the fruits, pomegranates, dates, avocado or alligator pears, limes, oranges, mangoes, pawpaws, bananas, etc., grow in great abundance in certain sections, and most of these are under cultivation in the spots where the influence of the white man is strongest.

Mahogany, gum and rubber are other very valuable West African products which the white trader, through the medium of renting concessions from the several Governments along the coast, is bringing into the limelight of intelligent conservation. The shea-butter tree, which is cherished for the very good lamp oil which it produces, is a healthy rival to kerosene, particularly the farther one gets away from communication with the sea. Up-country shea-butter oil serves the purpose admirably because the carrying charges on a five-gallon can of kerosene make it expensive to lug around. But as the shea-butter tree is almost as prolific as the oil-palm, I do not think it has as yet entered the cultivated class.

In the swamp belt along the coast, and particularly in southern Nigeria, there is no agriculture to speak of. Most of the real development of this sort is confined to the inland tribes, of which the Hausa of northern Nigeria is easily the most prominent. In addition to being a great trader, the Hausa is also a remarkably busy agriculturist and a fair stock farmer, his herds of cattle and flocks of sheep being features of northern Nigerian life that are growing more important all the while.

And, of course, there are chickens. The white man eats it, cooked in about six different ways, every day, so there must be quite a lot of them, though the chicken farm as we understand it has not yet reached West Africa. But things change and progress with such rapidity down there, I would not be too positive about it.

You will gather from all of this that the resources of West Africa are fairly well understood and in a fair way to being appreciated at their full worth by almost daily increasing cultivation. The war stimulated agriculture on the coast enormously; and cocoa, among other things, is now a kind of side partner of palm oil, kola nuts, mahogany and rubber. Also, you will doubtless be able to pick up in your own home town a sample of most of the products I have referred to, which do not complete the list by any means.

The only official source of information I know of, covering your requirements, are the annual reports issued by the British Colonial Office, the British Foreign Office and the French Colonial Office, of London and Paris respectively. Sir Alfred Moloney's Sketch of the Forestry of West Africa (London, 1887) would seem to go too far back for your purposes, although you would get a more comprehensive list of the economic plants from this book than, I'm afraid, I have been able to give you.

If you send for the annual reports referred to above, be careful to specify the particular colony you think you would like to know most about, as, of course, annual reports on the Gold Coast Colony would tell you little or nothing about Nigeria or Sierra Leone, each of these being under a different administration, with a governor, etc., of its own. The British Colonial Office takes care of these.

For the Ivory Coast apply to the French Colonial Office or the British Foreign Office. The same applies to Dahomey. Sir Harry Johnson's "Liberia" in two volumes (London, 1906) would also be worth while.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Picture Rocks of the Southwest

TWENTY-FIVE miles of them in one locality alone:

Question:—"At the present time I am a patient at the Marine Hospital, Fort Stanton. Within walking distance there are two places of interest. About two miles east of here there's a cave which has a lot of history attached to it. When the Army was stationed here they chased a bunch of Indians into it. They camped outside for three weeks intending to starve them out. The next seen of the Indians was in the Capitan Mountains, about thirty miles away. A great number of people have tried to find the other outlet, but as yet it has never been found.

About three miles west of the fort there is what they call Indian Rock. Two pictures of it I am sending you. You will notice that the rock that appears at the top of the picture has what looks like two eyes.

Any information which you can give about the cave and the Indian Rock, especially about the writing, such as the date and the people who put it on there, I would appreciate very much.

If these two pictures are of any interest to you, you may keep them."—FRANCIS BRAY, Fort Stanton, N. M.

Answer, by Mr. Robinson:—Was interested in the story you tell of the cave and have endeavored to find something further regarding it but so far have failed. I have talked to some old-timers including former soldiers, but have not been able to find anything regarding the legend.

I will try further and should I be able to get anything of interest will tell you.

There are many of the pictured rocks around the country, especially in the Southwest. There are two kinds—those painted on rocks, which the scientists call pictographs, and those cut or chipped into the stone, which they term petroglyphs. These latter in the Southwest are usually on rocks that have been subject to volcanic action, leaving the surface black or nearly so, while a little under the surface the rock is much lighter; and by pecking with a sharp, hard stone the markings such as your photographs show are made.

In southern Arizona between Phoenix and Buckeye there is a cliff of these stones, and for a distance of twenty-five or more miles the petroglyphs can be seen in an almost continuous band.

They do not seem to mean much—at least no key has been found that will tell us what they mean—and it is probable that while many of the marks mean something, and as a matter of fact we can find the water, lightning, and similar symbols, they probably are the result of various individuals idly marking the rock—having some meaning to them, but to no one else, much like some of the blank walls we find marked up by the idle boys and men in our own towns.

Much of this rock writing will date back to the people who inhabited the country prior to the coming of the Spaniards, who first visited the Rio Grande Valley in 1540 and spread over the rest of the country shortly after. Some of the markings are of later day, and some of the present time.

I am not enough of a scientist to tell whether the rock near Fort Stanton is decorated with symbols which have a meaning, nor whether it is prehistoric or modern. Those in Arizona mentioned above are undoubtedly prehistoric, dating to the time of the prehistoric inhabitants who built the great communal houses and the wonderful old irrigation canals which covered the great Salt River Valley and undoubtedly irrigated immense areas of land.

In early days I have traced out these canals, and in my work as a civil engineer have checked them as to size and grades. Some of them were twenty to forty feet wide on the bottom and in places went through cuts twenty feet deep, and the grades as perfect as the modern engineer would run. With such engineering skill and building abilities it is possible that they were just at the dawn of a picture writing that would take the place in a small measure of writing, and perhaps some of this may be finally deciphered. But it is probable that the most of the writings are as I have said.

Charm and Romance of Honolulu

EVEN the traffic cops can't make life prosy in Hawaii:

Question:—"I'm asking *Adventure* by writing to you for a little information *re* the Hawaiian Islands. Is Honolulu as charming and romantic as song-writers would have us believe, or is it spoiled by becoming modernized?

What is the full-blooded Hawaiian population of the islands? Are they really a dying race?

I have heard they are some of the finest specimens physically in the world. Is that so? Can you give me the average height of men and women?

Are the Hawaiian girls very beautiful? In Honolulu I suppose they dress as Americans, but in the smaller islands what clothing do men and women wear?

In appearance are the natives of Chinese features?"—STANLEY C. FOSTER, Rawlins, Wyo.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—In the sense that Honolulu enjoys a wonderful, soft climate, where the palms are nodding in the gentle breezes and the rhythm of the surf breaks on her wonderful beaches and the mellow moonlight floods the hills and valleys—then I say that it has charm and romance. Most visitors, however, get a rude shock at first when they see an up-to-date American city with traffic cops and all the horrors—and conveniences—of modern civilization; but the moonlight and the surf at the beach eventually get under the skin, and they come away vowing there is no place in the world having such charm and romance.

At present there are only thirty thousand full-blooded Hawaiians, and they are decreasing annually. They intermarry with other nationalities, and in effect they are marrying themselves out of existence.

Most of the Hawaiians are fine specimens of humanity; their average height is about five feet ten inches.

All girls are beautiful—some more so than others. This applies also to the Hawaiian girls. Most of them dress today in the latest American styles in both the towns and in the country.

In the early days the Hawaiians intermarried with the Chinese, and of course those descendants have Chinese features.

Fur-Trading in Baffinland and Thereabout

WHERE the compass dip-needle points nearly straight downward; and why:

Question:—"I would like to secure some information about Baffinland, and certain territory adjoining which does not seem to be covered by anybody else on 'Ask Adventure's' staff. I mean the islands just westward of Baffinland; namely, North Somerset, North Devon, Boothia, Bathurst Is., Prince of Wales Is., and King William Land, etc.

I am a competent navigator and licensed as such. Although I have never been there, I believe I understand roughly the conditions to be met with in that region, as far as navigation is concerned. I have been going to sea since I was a boy, and mention this so you will not think I am a foolhardy person.

I have been figuring on making fur-trading voyages there in a good, stanch, two-masted schooner with one mate, two able and four ordinary seamen on proportionate shares after deducting the expense of the trip from what we make.

I figure to get in as soon as the ice field opens up, then wintering in some protected cove or bay and getting out the next year before she freezes up again. I know how to provision.

When are Lancaster Sound, Hudson Strait, Fury and Hecla Straits navigable, and which of them do you think are the best entrances to the islands? (I would prefer Lancaster Sound.)

Has any company or syndicate the exclusive fur-trading rights in that region or any section of it?

What Canadian laws would I have to comply with?

I have a rough knowledge of the trading goods necessary, but any hints will be welcomed.

I would be glad to have any general information about the fur-bearing animals and natives of the region.

Several furriers I know want to educate me about furs but I am waiting for your answer to this letter so I can give the matter proper thought.

Now I know this is a big order to ask you to fill; but I assure you any information you choose to give will be highly appreciated by me.

Please omit my name."—D. L. P., New York.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—It is not at all a "foolhardy" idea to go into the region west of Baffinland in a sturdy fore-and-after; but as to how much fur you'd get is a question. You see that lies pretty well north, where there is no timber at all, and you'll only find the strictly *arctic* varieties of fur-bearers—blue and white fox, white wolf, white bear, arctic hare, and the various seals and walrus. Some of these seal pay to go after, and walrus hides are valuable, bringing as high as $1,000 a hide *after being dressed*. I can't tell you the present price of raw hides, but you might get that from some big leather-goods house.

Your best chance for fur would be to work down on the mainland—not on those islands. I've seen a two-season haul come out from Domino Run, Labrador coast, that was a *whale!* The otter pelts touched the deck when held out at arm's length by a man over six feet tall, and all pelts were as full-furred, dark and prime as any I ever saw. Two men had around $3,000 worth, and that was at prices which prevailed in 1899—twice as much now.

Lancaster Sound would be your best route. Don't try to go to Somerset or Devon, *via* Hudson Strait and Fury and Hecla. The tide-rips up in Fox Channel are a holy terror, and even in Summer you'll find the ice moving and lots of it, so that the chances of your being able to make it are less than even. All the ice is on the move, and most of the straits and sounds open by August 1st.

You'll want to make your start from the coaling-ports of Sydney or New Campbellton, Cape Breton, about July 10th, which would bring you through Belle Isle when free of ice. Belle Isle is a mean proposition any time before that date, though of course you could take the outside passage east of Newfoundland in order to fetch you into Lancaster Sound by August 1st.

Canada claims all that territory and is establishing posts of the R. N. W. M. P. at several places. I think you can go into any of that country for fur. The old Hudson's Bay Fur Co. only maintains its hold in any locality through power of its name. For instance, they run a line of boats into Hudson's Bay, and you can't get passage on them; but you can sail in on your own bottom and take your chances with little trouble if you don't trade for the fur of the Indians.

In the islands you mention, you'll have only Eskimos to deal with, and they'll come from down to the southeast on Baffinland. Not many natives between Banks Land and Devon, though there are tribes on the west coast of Baffinland that never saw a white man.

To trade with those Eskimos take colored ribbons, *clay* pipes and plug tobacco—no wooden pipes—card matches, muzzle-loading rifles using cap and ball, and pieces of lead pipe which they mold into bullets; Ingersoll watches, common hash knives—natives use them for dressing skins—good grade of steel hunting-knives with carborundum stones and show them how to use the stones. Any of those natives will work a year for a rifle of the muzzle-loading type costing $4-$5, or for several 2 x 4s ten feet long. Take plenty of coffee and sugar—don't forget to feed them plenty of sugar—and ordinary ship biscuit.

We paid our natives of that region—men only, though the women worked too—one two-ounce plug of navy tobacco and one card of matches per week. Don't take parlor or safety matches; they split each match and make two of it.

A prime article for trading is a slide telescope of the old cheap model. You can get a headman's wife or his dog-team for one. They use them for locating caribou and hand them down to their sons, whether they have lost their lenses or not.

Another thing. You can winter up there if you select a safe harbor for your ship. Look the coast over mighty carefully, and pick your anchorage *behind* some big cape or point that will take the crush of the ice from outside, and so protect your ship. You'll freeze in your ship, and where you have adequate shelter she'll come through in excellent shape; *but* be certain she'll get no squeezes from the big rafted floes at any time, especially when breaking up in the Spring or when forming in the late Fall. Fiala lost his ship by having to winter on a shore exposed to the north. Many others have done the same; so be sure to pick a safe anchorage, protected from the run of tide.

You'll need to take at least two first-class ship compasses, and three will be better, so you can strike an average of them all to set your courses. A dip-needle is drawn down at an angle of around 25 to 30 degrees from the vertical 'most anywhere around that region, and on Boothia it will point nearly straight downward. Also your declination will be from 120 to 180 west (or east) according to whether you are east or west of the magnetic meridian. Of course you'll be mostly in sight of land; but there are fogs, etc. The magnetic pole, you know, is on the west shore of Boothia, about opposite the easternmost point of Victoria Land.

I really think you'll do better in the fur line by trying the central or east-central portion of Labrador, and you'll have little or no trouble getting in or out. There are no otter, mink, sable, fisher, etc., north of the Circle.

As I have said I shall be glad to add anything further that you may care to ask, if I am able. I'm much interested in your proposed trip, because I myself planned a similar one, and in fact did go to Baffinland. You'd better get your dogs—if you plan to use them—at Black Lead Island, in Cumberland Gulf, on the east coast of Baffinland about 400 miles north of Cape Haven (Signuia Point). There is a Scotch whaling-station there, and you can get dogs, probably. Those dogs are acclimated and better for sledge-work than any you'd get in Labrador.

When the *Natchez* Raced the *Lee*

A RECORD made in 1870 that still stands:

Question:—"We shall appreciate it very much indeed if you will give the facts of the historic race between the *Robert E. Lee* and the *Natchez*, which occurred, as the writer remembers, some time in the sixties."—A. L. LANGTRY, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Zerr:—It took some time to get the correct version of the race. But I had the luck to run in with an old steamboat builder who had the "log" of both boats.

In the race against the *Natchez*, the *Robert E. Lee* made the trip from New Orleans to St. Louis in 3 days, 18 hours and 30 minutes. This time never has been equaled. The *Lee* was 297 feet long, 65 feet beam, with eight boilers and fired with coal. After the race with the *Natchez* the steamer was dismantled and the machinery placed on the second *Robert E. Lee*, which burned in the early '80s near Baton Rouge.

The time of the *Lee* from New Orleans to Cairo was 7 hours faster than the famous *Shotwell* of former days and beats all recent time of the *Natchez* by 3 hours, 34 minutes. In a former run the *Lee's* time was 3 days and 10 minutes. The *Natchez* beat her own late run by 2 hours and 34 minutes.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Trading in the South Seas

ALSO a few words about raising the vanilla bean:

Question:—"I notice that you give information regarding the South Pacific islands, and as I am thinking of going there, I would like some information about the trading possibilities, also regarding the vanilla and coconut culture and the living conditions. I have experience in running a schooner and am expecting to get one shortly, as I have been on fishing-smacks out of both Gloucester, Mass., and Dundee, Egremont, England."—DAN GANON, Nimrod, Mont.

Answer, by Mr. C. Brown, Jr.:—Your letter is not quite explicit enough. I wish you had put it in the form of definite questions. Too, I wish you could have let me have an idea of about the amount of working capital you will have. All these things are of vital importance when I am trying to advise a man.

Keep away from the trading game. You are not big enough to play it with the great concerns scattered throughout the South Seas.

With a capital of three or five thousand dollars, one can lease a fair piece of vanilla and coconut land in Tahiti and the adjacent Society Islands. The vanilla vine bears in its third year, and the bean, green or cured, is marketable in Papeete, Tahiti, from where one-half the vanilla supply of the world is shipped. Too, he can plant it to nuts and all manner of vegetables, holding his own until he receives his first returns from vanilla. Living is not expensive on a plantation—say about twenty-five dollars American a month.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

A FEW minutes ago the mailman brought me a package from Mr. A. C. DeRemer of Michigan. I've just finished reading the forty odd pages of longhand manuscript it contained. That's the sort of cooperation that counts. I'm going to sit back and let Mr. DeRemer have the floor for the rest of the issue.

The songs that follow, "gathered," he says, "in my younger days as a roving lumberjack," are both genuine and typical. They show clearly the marks of having been handed down by word of mouth rather than in print. Hence the rimes are not perfect, and every now and then something has gone wrong in a stanza. However I'm going to print them exactly as they came to me.

The first, which Mr. DeRemer entitles "The Folier Execution," is perhaps better known as "Fuller and Warren." It was known as early as 1874 and was undoubtedly based upon a real happening.

The Folier Execution

Ye sons of Columbia, your attention now I pray,
And a sorrowful story I will tell
That happened here of late in our Indiana State—
Heroes there are none can excel.

Folier he courted the fairest of the fair
And intended to make her his wife;
But she was like a lilo his heart she did ensnare,
And she robbed him of his honor and his life.

For a gold ring he gave her as a token of true love,
On the top was the image of a dove;
And secretly agreed for to married be with speed,
And promised by the powers above.

But this fickle-minded maid vowed again to be wed
To young Warren who lived in this place;
It was this fatal blow that did prove his overthrow
And adds to her shame and disgrace.

For when Folier came to hear he is deprived of his dear,
Then to young Warren he quickly did go,
And smiling to him did say: "I hear that you have injured me. Now justify your cause
That by you I have lost a prudent wife.
Confess that you have injured me or I will break the laws.
Young man, I will deprive you of your life!"

"Your cause I do deny, for I never did you wrong,
But my heart to your darling is bound.
And more than this I say: This is my wedding day
In spite of all the heroes in this town!"

Folier hearing this, filled with anger and with love,
Caused many for to weep and for to cry,
For with one fatal shot he killed Warren on the spot
And smiling said, "I am ready now to die."

He was tried and condemned by an honorable court,
And in Lawnsdale he is waiting now to die
An ignominious death for to hang above the earth
Like a garment on the gallows so high.

But there is one consolation, let it long remembered be,
As the gallows waved high above his head:
He did believe and was baptized; from sin he was set free
And his spirit to glory now has fled.

Oh, the moments they drew nigh when Folier was to die.
He smiled and bid the audience adieu.
Like an angel he did stand, for he was a handsome man;
On his breast he wore a ribbon of blue.

Five hundred spectators were gathered all around
When the judge wiped a tear from his eye,
Saying, "Cursed be she who has caused this misery,
For on the gallows she now had ought to die."

You may look through Judges, through Genesis,
Through Samuel, Paul or Job,
And the truth of my doctrine you will find—
That woman is essentially the downfall of man
Since Adam by Eve was beguiled.

Come, all you loving husbands who have a prudent wife,
Treat her with honor and true love,
For my opinion is they are harder to be found
Than mansions in the heavens above.

THE next is not quite so unfair in its judgment of womankind. It contains a rather interesting superstition concerning the impossibility of concealing murder. Here the handkerchief of the victim reveals the murderer.

The Silvery Tides

'Twas of a fair young creature who lived down by the seaside
Whose lovely form and feature was called the village pride,
'Twas of a young sea captain who Mary's heart did gain,
It was true love for Henry
While on the raging main.

It was in young Henry's absence, a nobleman there came
For the courting of fair Mary, who did not like the same,
Saying, "Your vows are vain, for on the main I love but one," she cried,
"Therefore begone, for I love but one, and he
Is on the silvery tide."

Then, mad with desperation, this nobleman did say,
"To prove your separation I'll take your life away.
I'll watch you late and early until alone," he cried,
"And I'll send your body a-floating
Along with the silvery tide."

One morning as Mary was walking, one morning to take the air,
Down by the raging ocean he met this lady fair.
"Now," says this heartless villain, "consent to be my bride,
Or I'll send your body a-floating
Down with the silvery tide."

With trembling lips said Mary, "My vows I ne'er shall break,
For Henry I love dearly, and I'll die for his love's sake."
With a handkerchief he bound her hands and threw her over the side,
And screaming she went weeping
Along with the silvery tide.

In two or three days after, young Henry returned from sea,
Expecting to be happy and fix his wedding day.
"Oh, I fear your true love's murdered," his aged parents cried,
"Or proved her own destruction
On the banks of the silvery tide."

Young Henry on his pillow lay, could scarcely take any rest,
The thoughts of lovely Mary it troubled his aching breast.
Young Henry rose at midnight gloom and all alone walked he
To wander the sand-bank over
Down by the raging sea.

Just as the day was dawning the corpse of Mary he spied
Was to and fro a-floating
Along with the silvery tide

He knew it was his Mary by his own ring on her hand,
And to untie the handkerchief it brought him to a stand,—
The name of this base murderer in full upon the same
Which proved who murdered Mary
Down on the raging main.

This nobleman was taken; the gallows was his doom
For the murdering of fair Mary who was scarcely in her bloom.
Young Henry so affected he wandered till he died,
His last words were for Mary,
"It was for me she died."

SEND all contributions to the department and all requests for old songs direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Avenue, Berkeley, California. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MARCH 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial** and **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

SEAMEN ALL *John Webb*
"One-Two" Mac learns a lesson.

THE HORSE FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY *R. E. Hamilton*
A cowboy plans revenge for his father's murder.

A FRONTIER ROBIN HOOD An Article *Michael J. Phillips*
A mounted scourge of the Old West.

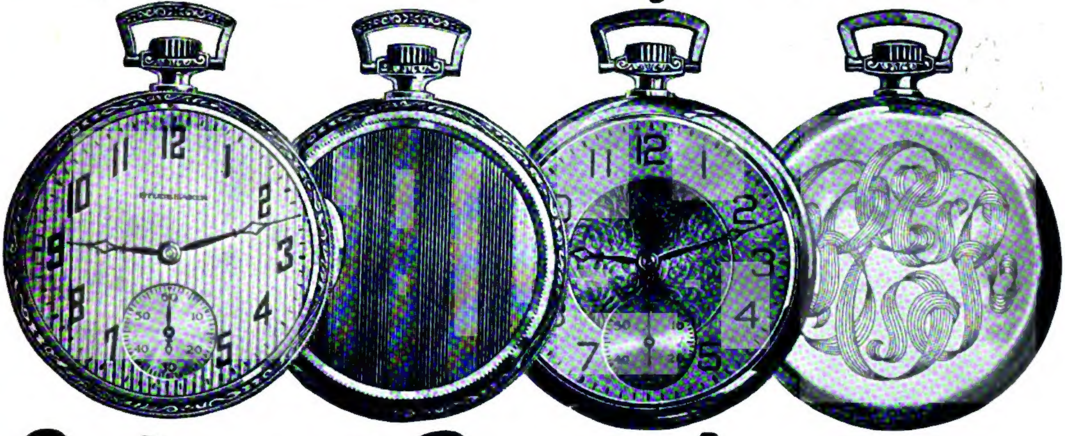
PORTO BELLO GOLD A Five-Part Story Conclusion *Arthur D. Howden Smith*
How the treasure was buried on Treasure Island.

A STONE AGE VENDETTA *L. P. B. Armit*
A cannibal in the hands of the enemy tribe.

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Hugh Pendexter, W. Townend, John Webb, William Ashley Anderson, Arthur O. Friel, Harold Lamb, Georges Surdez, Arthur D. Howden Smith, W. C. Tuttle, Leonard H. Nason and Frederick J. Jackson; and short stories by Barry Scobee, H. C. Bailey, Michael J. Phillips, Frank Robertson, Raymond S. Spears, James K. Waterman, William Byron Mowery, F. St. Mars, Sidney Herschel Small, George E. Holt and others—stories of the old frontier, the sea, Africa, medieval France, the Amazon, Labrador, the War, medieval Asia, Morocco, Japan; of viking-farers, Indian-fighters, knights-at-arms, Colonial troopers, cow-punchers, crusaders, doughboys, Tatars and able-bodied seamen—adventurers the world around.

"Buy a Studebaker Direct from the Maker"



Only $ 1 Down!

Just $1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studebaker, 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime—direct from the maker at lowest prices ever named on equal quality. Send at once for FREE Book of advance Watch Styles.

21 Jewel
STUDEBAKER
-the *Insured* Watch

Choice of 54 latest, thin model, Art Beauty Cases in yellow gold, green gold or white gold; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions. Direct to you from the factory—the greatest watch value in America today.

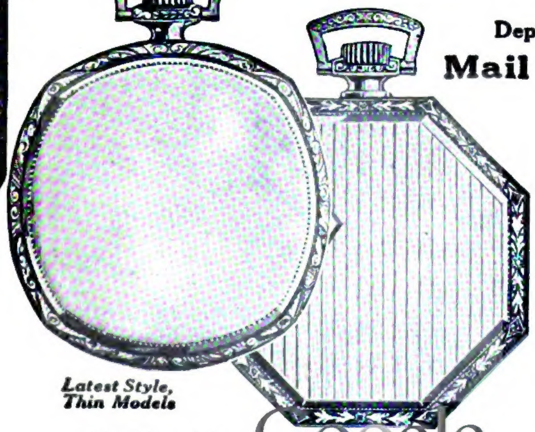
Write for Style Book! Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studebaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch *direct from the maker*—save big money—and pay for it while you are using it. Write for our Free Book. It will post you on watch styles and watch values. Send coupon at once. Get Free Chain offer today while it lasts.

STUDEBAKER WATCH CO.
Dept. 213 South Bend, Indiana

Mail Coupon for FREE Book

FREE!
Watch Chain

For a limited time we are giving away *free* with every Studebaker Watch a beautiful Watch Chain. Write now while offer lasts.



Latest Style, Thin Models

Studebaker Watch Co.
Dept. 213 South Bend, Indiana

Please send me your Free Book of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your $1.00 down offer.

Name..

Address..

City..........................*State*..........................

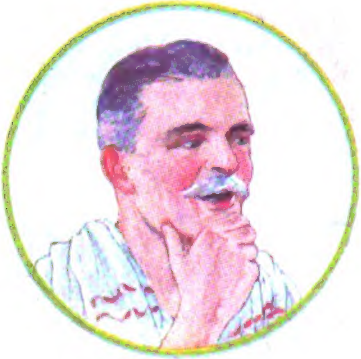
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

COLGATE'S

30

Shaving Stick

"HANDY GRIP" AND REFILL

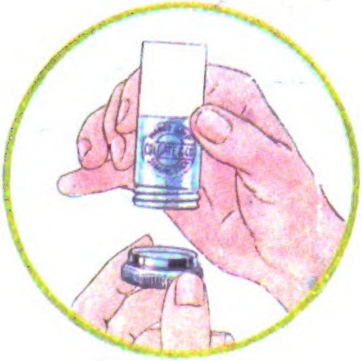


Comfort

Comfort,
Convenience,
Economy

Comfort

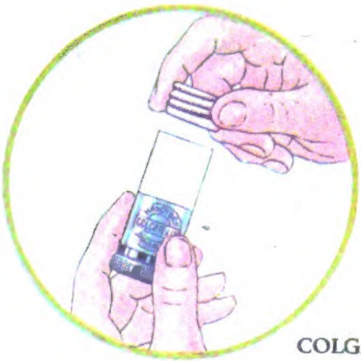
Colgate's Shaving Stick fully deserves the enthusiastic praise it receives daily from hundreds of thousands of men. With hot water or cold it makes a wonderful lather for softening the beard and assuring an easy shave. It leaves the face cool and refreshed.



Convenience

Convenience

Colgate's "Handy Grip" is convenient and serviceable. It has no complicated parts to become loose or disconnected. Screwing a Refill Shaving Stick into the "Handy Grip" takes but a moment, and is very simple. The soap itself is threaded.

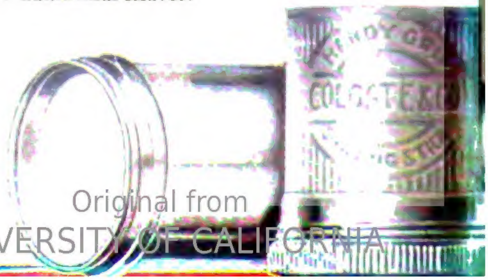


Economy

Economy

Colgate's is economical. The "Handy Grip" and metal container last for years. "Refill" Shaving Sticks cost you the price of the soap alone. The soap is good to the last. There is no waste.

Moisten the last bit of your used Shaving Stick and press it upon the end of the refill, thus getting 20 additional shaves.



COLGATE & CO.
Est. 1806
New York